No. 249 / NOVEMBER 1993

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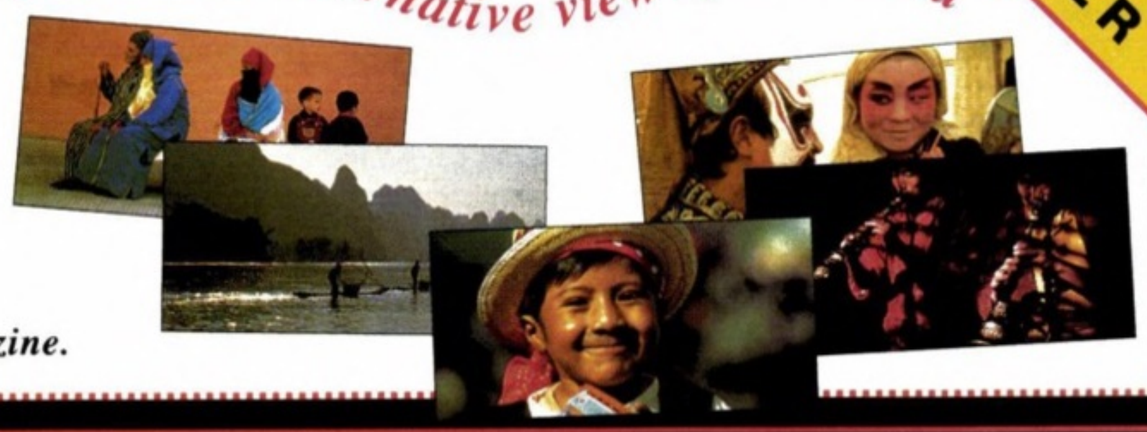

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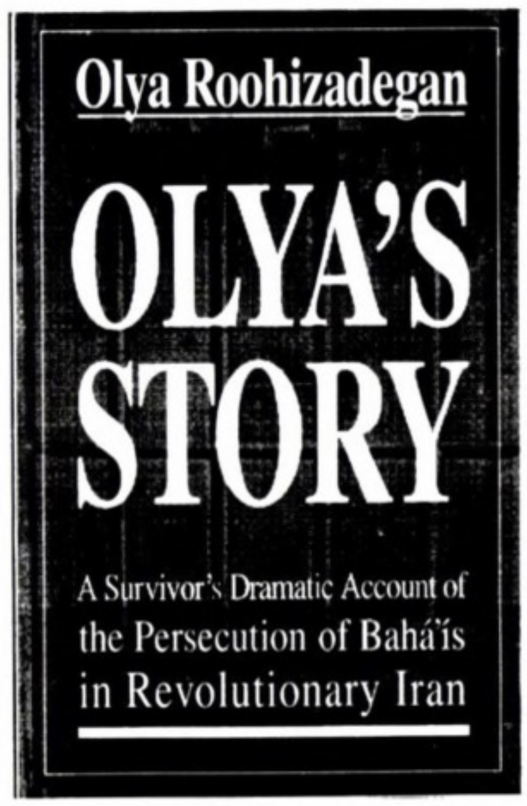

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THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

Liberty

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

I HARDLY ever read the 'letter from the editor' in magazines or journals. I always imagine that they are a covert form of promoting the publication; too self-conscious to tell you anything of interest. When I first started working here I was told that the purpose of this 'editor's letter' was to 'demystify' the process of putting together an issue of **NI**. That made it seem *marginally* more worthwhile. But then what exactly are the 'myths' one is meant to be exploding?

I reckon one of them *might* be that we all work together in cosy collectivity and that an **NI** line on any given subject emerges easily from the common womb of like-mindedness.

Sometimes it does. And sometimes it doesn't. And this is one case where it didn't. The main locus of disagreement was in that rather crucial relationship between first editor and second editor. The latter, in this case, was Richard Swift in Canada.

My first magazine proposal – basically the main points that the issue would be making – met with this response from Richard: 'I read with interest your liberty points and fear my misgivings are still intact.' There followed a page and a half of misgivings.

It became obvious that we were coming at the subject from very different angles, each with our own precious political baggage. There was going to be plenty to talk about when Richard arrived in Oxford the following week. But as we argued we actually found that we agreed a lot more than we disagreed.

Still, it seemed touch-and-go. And when I started sending articles across to him in Canada it was with an element of: 'Let's see what he makes of *this* one then!'

As the process unfolded, however, most of the remaining potential disagreements became agreements. And our differences – and the need to listen to and accommodate those differences – were having an enriching effect on the content of the magazine.

It's not really surprising that there should have been such misgivings at first. Liberty is a subject close to the heart. The idea that someone – anyone – should start pronouncing on what it is or what it should be seems particularly perverse and paradoxical.

But it goes on all the time. Agenda of liberty are being set – and we often don't even know it's happening. Demystifying those agenda is one of the aims of **NI**.

And are you now any less mystified about this process of putting together an issue of **New Internationalist**?

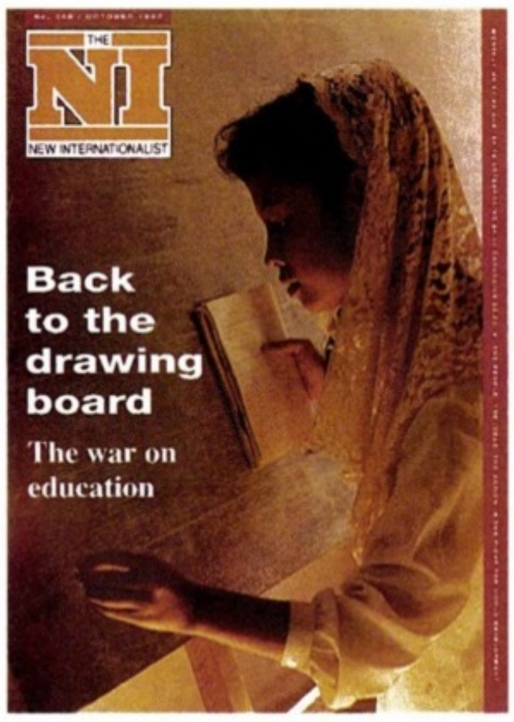
Only you can tell. If you bothered to read this, that is.

Vanessa Baird

Vanessa Baird
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-Operative*

Forgotten adults

Come on. Education is for life? So where are the adults in your magazine on Education (**NI 248**)? We had lots of lovely photos of children in classrooms, but no mention of the



many and brave initiatives being taken all over the world to teach literacy and numeracy to those adults who have been deprived of the chance to learn. Please, next time, don't forget the grown-ups.

Susan Schneider
Glasgow, Scotland, UK

Transnational failure

Your issue on Multinationals (**NI 246**) failed to explain what makes these companies tick, either in terms of their internal organization or their strategies in the world's markets. Consequently, it failed to say anything positive about what can be done to make these bodies accountable to the people.

I was particularly concerned at the apparent failure to appreciate that few of these corporations are genuinely 'multinational', the bulk of them being *national* companies which happen to operate in a number of different countries – hence the term 'transnational'. I detected a tendency to identify the key problem as one of 'globalization' when in fact it is one of transnational capitalism (the articles on Central America and Mexico show this clearly enough). Transnational capitalism is compatible with an interstate system based on rigid national divisions, but globalization, in the sense of the development of global institutions with some independence from nation-state control, inevitably tends to undermine nationalism. Such undermining, which in my view has centuries to run, is essential if we are ever to put an end to exploitation and oppression.

Pete Somerville,
Manchester, UK

Two-way cut

The 'new globalism' of transnational corporations cuts both ways. By shifting investment from higher to lower wage countries, transnational corporations exert downward pressure on wages in the wealthier nations, as you yourselves point out in your issue on Multinationals (**NI 246**).

Despite the universally exploitative nature of early economic development, I would argue that the same corporations must also eventually place upward pressure on wages in poorer nations, once their supplies of cheap labour dry up and competing employers bid up wages. The newly-industrialized economies of South-East Asia, of which South Korea is an example, are illustrative of this process.

Higher wages in the South and lower wages in the North – what's wrong with that?

Tim Young,
Exeter, UK

Consuming morality

I feel compelled to write in response to Lorraine Walsh's comment (*Letters* **NI 246**) about cocoa production and consumption. The most important concept to grasp is that of the morality of employment. It should not be that women have to work in hazardous conditions for meagre pay. If these companies were boycotted *en masse* they would have to improve working conditions if they were to survive. If they failed to do so, surely the empty niche would be filled by a company willing and able to improve conditions?

Things like this do not happen overnight. However, we must never think of such issues as 'no-win situations'. The way forward is to educate the consumer about his/her effect on the world.

Mandy Meikle,
West Lothian, Scotland

Signs of human life

As a newly-renewed subscriber to **NI** I was interested to get the issue on Tourism (**NI 245**). In the past I have sometimes become infuriated by what I felt was a 'holier than thou' political correctness, and what often seemed like a complete lack of a sense of humour among any of your contributors or staff – and at times like those have eventually stopped subscribing! It's impossible to tell from one issue but there did seem to be encouraging signs of humanness in your issue about tourism.

Christine Bell
Bath, UK

Auden not Yeats

Firdaus Kanga (*Tourism*, **NI 245**) may indeed know more about English culture than the English, but it was not Yeats or Keats, but Auden, who pointed out that we must love one another or die.

Mary Finlay
Lahr, Germany

Delighted with Debt

I really enjoyed the issue on Debt (**NI 243**). I can't tell you the number of times I've sat down to read articles on worldwide finance and felt completely at sea with the complicated structure set up by Western governments. But the pictures in the comic issue really helped, and I now feel that the next time I sit down to read an in-depth article I'll have some basis for understanding. I'm now in the process of finding a more ethical bank.

Mary Ann Simmons
London, UK

Crass letter

What purpose does *Letter from Lahore* serve? It strikes me as an often paternalistic viewpoint of a privileged foreigner in Pakistan, making crass generalizations, and continuing the good old Western tradition of putting the lives of people in the South under a microscope,

The **New Internationalist** welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Anarchy not anarchy

I am used to the mainstream media, in their ignorance, equating chaos, riots and destruction with 'anarchy', but the **NI** ought to know better.

Alice, your main character in the issue on Debt (**NI 243**) says that the hardship and anger brought about by retro-development and World Bank loans 'sounds like anarchy'. No. Anarchy, which literally means 'without leaders', is more likely to be associated with non-hierarchical organization, co-operation and communalism. Anarchism today is most often linked with feminism, anti-fascism, human and animal rights, and environmental campaigning in the lives of many people working for a better world.

Fiona Weir
Marsden, UK

VIV QUILLIN

for greedy consumption by armchair travellers and sociologists. Where is the political education focus in this feature? Perhaps **NI** would consider running a feature written by an indigenous or black person living in the North to focus on the daily grind of dealing with living in an alien hostile society, surviving systematic racism, exposing the structural causes of oppression? But then I guess that story would lack the Eastern 'spice' and 'colour' of *Letter from Lahore*.

Abdul Aziz Choudry
Otautahi, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Politically correct

I find it disturbing that **NI** readers and writers use the term 'politically correct' in a derogatory manner.

The mainstream media has scornfully named 'politically correct' those who advocate male-female or racial equality, gay rights, or the right to wear and eat what one chooses. To be an anti-racist is *not* the same as to ban Enid Blyton books as sexist and racist. The media, by terming both actions as 'politically correct' would have us think so.

Why not have an issue on political correctness? Come to think of it, you've had many.

Sheila O'Reilly
Guelph, Ontario, Canada

New alphabet

After a great many years (I am now 93), I have developed a simplification of the English language (having a phonetic alphabet) which I suggest would be suitable as the language of the world. A lecturer in phonetics said that it was 'the best possible compromise'. It would co-exist with all other languages – ideally everyone would be bilingual.

The problems of the world, we know, cannot be solved at national level. I contemplate a world ethical civilization and complete participation in world democracy using a common language. If anyone is interested, they are welcome to contact me.

Jori Nelson
Box 340, Thame, Aotearoa/New Zealand

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the NI.

Letter from Lagos

What's in a name?

What a baby is called reflects not only its place in the family, but also the circumstances in which it is born. Elizabeth Obadina reports on changing names in changing times.

My newest neighbour, little Oluwatosin, was named yesterday on the seventh day of her short life. Like most Nigerians she will grow up answering to a much shorter name, Tosin, but to her parents she will always be 'Oluwatosin', meaning 'God is worth worshipping'.

Unlike her brothers and sisters, all born in easier circumstances over 10 years ago, Tosin was the product of a troubled pregnancy. Her first breath was drawn not in the well-equipped private hospital where her siblings first saw the light of day, but in the local general hospital where a lack of drugs, dressings and equipment are the norm. Luckily for Tosin and her forty-something mum, God had heard the family's prayers for safe childbirth: hence the new-born's heartfelt name.

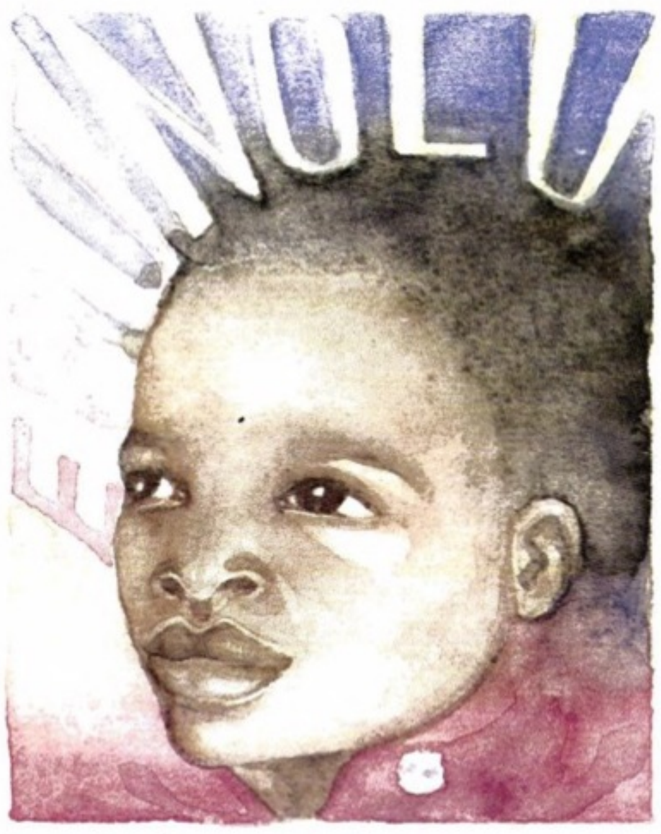


ILLUSTRATION: MIRIAM McCURDY

Africa is a land where names mean something and parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles will all bless the new child with names appropriate to the circumstances of her or his birth. Tosin's brothers and sister were born in a comfortable era, before the Nigerian middle class was annihilated by the reforms wrought by an economic restructuring programme. Their names are celebratory. The first-born son's name, Olumide, proclaims that 'God has arrived' to bless the newly-married couple. His sister's name, Olajoke, means 'an adorable girl bringing wealth'. Then came Biodun, the 'festival child', born in the Christmas season.

After this my neighbours felt too 'sapped' – Nigeria's IMF-approved economic reforms rejoice in the name of the Structural Adjustment Programme, or SAP – to have any more children. So did I. I ignored the constant hinting from my mother-in-law.

'Ah Mummy,' I would frequently explain, 'Times are changing. People can't afford big families anymore. Look at Mama Olu next door. She also stopped at three.'

'I suppose it's sensible,' my mother-in-law would sigh. 'Everything needs so much money nowadays. School fees, hospital bills, food, transport... I don't know how anyone manages at all.' Indeed since Mama Olu and I had our first-borns the value of the naira has slipped from one naira being worth 80 UK pence, to one UK pound exchanging for nearly 60 naira. The resultant inflation has done more to promote the case of family planning in Africa's most populous nation than any amount of moralizing over the perils of over-population. Nowadays the average family size amongst the Yorubas is six children. A decade ago it was nearly nine.

Then Mama Olu dropped her bombshell. Little Tosin was on the way. What with biological clocks ticking away and winding down, next door went for their 'quota'. Four children is the officially recommended maximum family size for Nigerians. Mother-in-law and sundry aunties fired a few more salvoes in my direction.

'It's not too late for you either,' they chorused. But what to call a 1993 child?

My eldest, Adenike, grew into her name, 'one needing petting and constant care'. Nike developed diabetes when she was eleven years old. She has a quicksilver temper arising from a finely-honed sense of justice. There was little choice about Babajide, my middle child's name. He was the first son to be born into the family following his grandfather's death. He was 'father who had woken up'.

Today's babies' names carry more pointed messages. Ireti, 'Hope', is enjoying a revival, but more common are names which combine prayer tinged with desperation such as Oluyomi 'God save me', or Oluwasanmi 'Maybe God will favour me'.

Little Tosin's naming ceremony was a simple affair. Nowadays guest lists are pared to the bare bone; spring water replaces alcoholic drinks freely offered to guests a decade ago, and a goat is killed instead of a cow. But at least Tosin's arrival and naming was celebrated.

As I crossed the gorge separating our estate from Lagos' five-star Sheraton Hotel last week I stopped, always nosy, to investigate the cause of a large crowd gazing over the bridge into the bush below. Two young men were bringing up a baby someone had noticed dumped with the rubbish. She was alive and seemed well. Amid the murmurs of concern and voices raised in indignation that Nigeria has come to such a pass that mothers throw away such 'fine babies', the little girl had a most unorthodox naming ceremony. One stout matron insisted, 'Such a child can only bear one name. She must be called Ebunolu'.

It means 'gift from God'. ■

Elizabeth Obadina is a freelance writer and journalist living in Lagos.

Liberty

Ideals and low deals

EUGENE DELACROIX / THE LOUVRE

*We talk about it, dream about it, may even lay down our lives for it. But what underlies the concept of 'liberty'? **Vanessa Baird** digs a little deeper to reveal its hidden politics .*

She does not look at us, but off into the distance – seeming to see what we can only imagine. What we do see – indeed can't help but see – is her, the woman in white running towards us, over the barricades.

Eugene Delacroix's depiction of 'Liberty leading the people' – painted shortly after the French Revolution – meets all the requirements of the day. She combines androgynous classical good looks, the resolutely impassioned gaze of the visionary and the attributes of an energetic, young, Mother Nation. At her feet lies the rubble of the old order, the *ancien regime*, plus a few of its dead or dying foot soldiers.

This symbol of emancipation has resonated across the world. From Chile to China she, or versions of her, have been the motif for countless revolutions against an established order of oppression.

On my desk lands another image, passed on to me by a friend. It's a full page advertisement featuring a woman in a very similar pose. The word 'Liberté' is emblazoned on the opposite page. The text goes on to describe what this international mobile phone system can do for you. 'Only Vodaphone can offer this,' I am assured. 'Liberate yourself. Enjoy freedom of speech and security. Rise above the rest.'

Later, watching TV, I see another depiction of liberty – yet again represented by a woman. This one is floating through the air with an inane, blissful smile on her face. Has she dropped a couple of tabs of acid? No, she's got her period, giving her a chance to enjoy the extraordinary liberty offered her by *this* particular brand of sanitary towel.

The illusion of liberty can be used to sell anything and everything. Most of the time we are being sold the same old things, presented to make us believe that commodities will magically open the door to an exciting, liberating, even dangerous new array of freedoms.

Take Madonna – for many the consummate spirit of 'post-feminist' liberty. Remixing the images of Marilyn Monroe, Catholic iconography, and mainstream pornography, she has produced a version of liberty with phenomenally high retail

ALEX WEBB / MAGNUM

New York Trade Centre's sidewalk – and liberty's unequal playing field.

value. She produces herself as both a self-pornographing sexual libertine, and a liberated woman in charge of her own affairs.

Bombarded by this relentless barrage of images, icons and rhetoric I find myself wondering what is this idea of 'liberty' all about? What has it to do with life as lived by millions of people on this planet? Is it just another image in a capitalist world that according to photographer Susan Sontag 'requires a culture based on images' and that 'needs to furnish vast amounts of entertainment in order to stimulate and anaesthetise the injuries of class, race and sex'? Or has it some deeper political significance?

Perhaps one should take a few steps back to where the idea of individual liberty, as a political and philosophical concept, first emerged.

Birth of a concept

Ideas of freedom exist in most traditional thought systems – Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic, Confucian, you name it. But the concept of personal liberty and rights protected in law became dominant with the emergence of the market economies of the West. And it is the Western idea of liberty that holds sway in today's world.

Writing in mid-seventeenth century Europe, Thomas Hobbes reckoned that liberty hinged on a social contract with the sovereign. Roughly paraphrased it amounts to: 'I give you my allegiance and authority over me and you protect me'. The idea was to protect individuals from each other. Without the State 'life is nasty, brutish and short,' he wrote.[1] Another Englishman, John Locke, fastened onto this the idea that fundamental to liberty was the right to economic security, which for him was embodied in private property.

Some would argue that the connection between liberty and private property was already firmly lodged in the European mindset when Christopher Columbus arrived in the 'New World'. So perplexed was he to see people who appeared to enjoy a considerable degree of liberty – but had no concept of land ownership – that he could only conclude that they could not really be free and therefore were uncivilized.

There were, of course, popular movements that challenged the equation of liberty with property – peasants and workers who fought for the right to organize, political dissenters who fought for freedom of assembly, reformers who fought to expand a restrictive franchise that gave the vote only to 'men of property'. And in the eighteenth century French thinker Jean Jacques Rousseau, came up with the notion of natural liberty. 'Man [sic],' he said, was born free, but found himself 'everywhere in chains' due to custom and society. What was needed was a new social contract enabling the natural order of freedom to be reinstated. He proposed universal suffrage for all men – but didn't mention women.[2]

By the nineteenth century Western concepts of liberty had expanded to include free trade and laissez-faire capitalism. Central to this tradition was the view that 'he [sic] who governs best, governs least'. Freedom from interference (negative liberty) would naturally give rise to freedom to do as one liked (positive liberty). Individuals should be given as free a rein as possible, according to liberal optimists like John Stuart Mill, a firm believer in the reasonableness of educated human nature.[3]

But what underpinned this version of liberty was neither reasonable, humane nor

STUART FRANKLIN / MAGNUM

Fragment of a dream – as seen by students just before the Tiananmen Square massacre, 1989.

natural. Its foundation was unquestioned liberty-taking – at the expense of women, children, and the colonized peoples of Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Americas. In the name of 'liberty' and under economic policies of laissez-faire, slavery flourished and foreign countries were plundered of their land and resources. Free trade was the excuse for Britain's Opium Wars against China when the latter tried to stop the drug coming into the country. All the while women remained the property (read 'slaves') of their menfolk.

Whose liberty?

Today women have the vote in most parts of the world and colonized peoples have fought free of their colonial masters. So have we been raised from galley slaves to passengers on the great ship of Liberty? Can we take our place alongside the white men on the deck?

Not quite.

Liberty is there for all in theory – but is still carefully rationed in practice. Although most images of liberty are female, women know that there is a lot less liberty in their lives than in those of their male counterparts. It's not just that women are generally poorer and have fewer career breaks. It is also the invisible strings that keep women bound into certain types of behaviour, from Toronto to Timbuktu – such strings kept tight by the need for male patronage and the ever-present threat of male violence.

While many more Third World countries are now following the path to parliamentary democracy and liberal economic policies, the effect on people's everyday lives is far from liberating. The jobless factory worker in Bombay is hardly more free now that the Indian Government – with the encouragement of the IMF – has pulled down trade barriers and let in imports that put local manufacturers out of business. The citizens of Pakistan or Kenya hardly enjoy political freedom just because their governments – wishing to impress the West with their democratic ways – hold rigged elections to consolidate their grip on power.

Today puffed up phrases about liberty are spouted most vigorously not by civil liberties activists but by right-wing politicians, captains of industry, free marketeers, publishers of pornography, and self-satisfied academics. In the words of historian Eric Hobsbawm: 'It is a paradox of liberty that it has become the slogan of those who needed it least and want to deny it to those who needed it most.' [4]

This has been most clearly illustrated in the UK with the political agenda set in motion by Margaret Thatcher. Ceaseless rhetoric of 'freedom' and 'deregulation' disguised the actual curbing of freedom on an unprecedented scale. Anti-union and anti-lesbian and gay legislation were the order of the day. New censorship restrictions were imposed on the reporting of the war in Northern Ireland. Thatcherite economic policies created massive – hardly liberating – unemployment.

One of the reasons that the Right has so successfully exploited the concept of liberty lies in the central contradiction of the Western idea of liberty itself: that it has both a tremendous emancipatory potential and what has been described as 'a seemingly limitless capacity to legitimate social inequality and undemocratic economic arrangements'.[5]

Equality

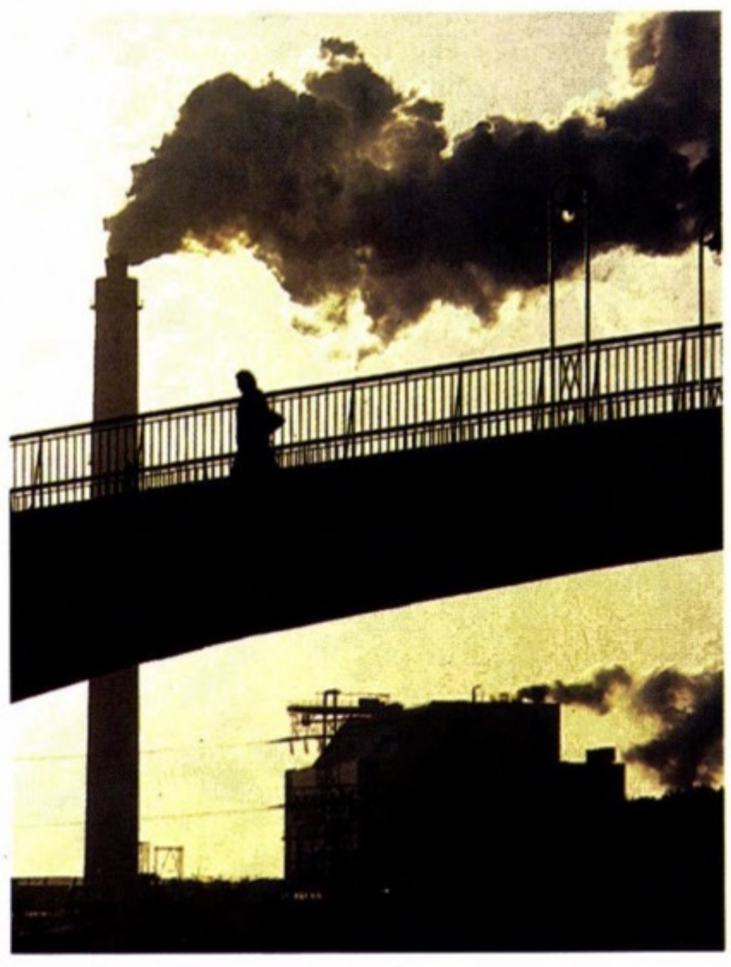
You can see the effects of those undemocratic economic arrangements in any city of the world today – be it Lima, Lagos, or Los Angeles – where rich and poor may find themselves on the same piece of cement yet inhabiting completely different realities. Less immediately obvious is the deeply undemocratic relationship between individuals and business interests. The rights drawn up to protect personal property have almost imperceptibly been transferred to huge corporations. 'Corporate groups are treated as fictive individuals and are thus endowed with the rights that individuals in a free society are accorded,' say economists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis.[5]

Actually they have much more liberty than individuals. If I deliberately blind a rabbit I will rightly be prosecuted for cruelty to animals. But if Max Factor or Revlon daily blind hundreds of thousands of rabbits to test cosmetics, then that's okay.

If villagers dump their household waste in streams or at a factory gate, that's an offence. But ICI or Dow Chemicals pollute the very air we breathe or water we use: that's okay too. It seems the larger and more impersonal the corporation, the more protection it gets.

If the power relations between the individual and corporation are skewed in the rich world, imagine the daunting task faced by the poor residents of Bhopal still trying to get compensation out of Union Carbide. The economic liberty of the powerful

Corporate liberties are foul air for individual freedom.



JULIO ETCHART / REPORTAGE

ABBAS / MAGNUM

Expressing identity: Muslim women and girls take brush to canvas in India.

means ever decreasing political liberty for the rest of us.

But hang on. Isn't this getting very negative? After all, the classical liberal and modern libertarian concept of liberty states the possibilities for human freedom in an explicit way rarely found in other cultures. This may be true, but what it fails to do is identify the roots of domination – mainly patriarchy, racism and wealth. It assumes a level field on which the game of liberty can be played out fairly.

In theory an Aboriginal woman sleeping rough on the streets of Sydney has the same freedom of speech as media mogul and multi-millionaire Rupert Murdoch. But we know that in practice that is not the case and that liberty – like money – grows in the hands of the powerful and shrinks in those of the disempowered.

Liberty will not, of itself, bring liberation. In the words of feminist lawyer Catharine MacKinnon: 'Anyone with an ounce of political analysis should know that freedom before equality, freedom before justice will only further liberate the powerful and will never free what is most in need of expression.'[6]

One strategy for trying to get more equality of opportunity is affirmative action. This means making a positive effort to get more women, black and working- class people into jobs that have hitherto been the preserve of the affluent, white male – medicine and law, to take just two examples.

Such strategies have created the most furious of backlashes – mainly from affluent, white men. They come not only from the political right but the liberal centre too. Australian Robert Hughes writes about 'a culture of complaint' where political correctness and affirmative action threaten to 'fray' the liberal fabric of 'America'.[7] Liberal philosopher Michael Sandel inveighs passionately against affirmative action.[8] While political theorist Francis Fukuyama laments 'genius' being crushed by calls for equality and culture critic Camille Paglia delivers fast and furious invectives against contemporary feminism which she stereotypes as a 'puerile, paranoid fantasy of male oppressors and female sex object victims'.[9,10]

Clash and diversity

Liberties clash. Of course they do. One person's right to information may clash with another's right to privacy. One person's freedom of speech may clash with another's freedom from racial abuse. One person's liberty may be another person's harm. Or in the words of literary critic Isaiah Berlin: 'The liberty of the wolf often means death to the sheep.'[11]

Laissez-faire policies have the illusion of being neutral and therefore fair to all creatures. In fact they benefit the wolf and are indifferent to the harm done to the sheep. If liberty is to be anything other than a travesty, an affluent white man's con trick, anything other than what writer Susan Griffin calls 'a small idea' running counter to the greater task of 'liberation', then it must be continually negotiated – between rich and poor, male and female, black and white, North and South, gay and straight.

That means taking into account a diversity of viewpoints. It gets complicated, and does not fit easily into the simple, Disneyworld mentality of exponents of the 'New World Order'. In the words of Muslim scholar Zia Sardar: 'The world has become hostage to a single civilization: that of the West. And the main power of this civilization comes not from military might or political ability or economic strength but from the power to define. To the Third World it says: "Either you accept my definition of freedom in terms of the free market and parliamentary democracy or you become my slave." Such enslavement takes the form of cultural subservience, economic pressure, sanctions, withholding of aid, or more direct military force.'[12]

Liberty has to be about more than just 'letting [some] people do what they want'. It also has to be about letting people define themselves in their own way. That's why identity politics or religion are relevant for oppressed people. And it's why language is so important – something that those who have been part of the culture that defines rather than the one that is defined may find hard to understand.

In a world where liberty becomes equated with little more than the freedom to accumulate consumer goods, it's not easy to clear the space for a more spiritual, more rounded self-realization. Opening our minds to other notions of liberty can only invigorate and enrich us. Like democracy, liberty has to be part of a discourse. It cannot exist in absolutist isolation. A feminist or an ethnic minority version of liberty is a call for equality. A traditional, pre-industrial or a communist society focuses on collective rather than individual freedom. A Buddhist notion concentrates on spiritual liberty. A Muslim concept hinges on the notion of trusteeship, of freedom limited by an ultimate responsibility and accountability to God. While an ecological view shifts the centre away from humans and towards the survival of the planet and all its creatures.

To escape from the narrow 'doing what I want to do' and 'having what I want to have' version of liberty will involve engaging with and responding to others. Otherwise the concept of liberty becomes static and false; a totem of power like the US Statue of Liberty, stony, white and phallic. And which – like Liberty in the Delacroix painting – is both inappropriately and appropriatively dressed as a woman. ■

1 *Leviathan* (1651), Thomas Hobbes (Pelican Classics 1977). **2** *The Social Contract* (1762), Jean Jacques Rousseau (Everyman 1977). **3** *On Liberty* (1859), John Stuart Mill (Oxford 1991). **4** *Workers*, Eric Hobsbawm (New York Pantheon 1984). **5** *Democracy and Capitalism*, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis (Basic Books 1987). **6** *Feminism Unmodified*, Catharine MacKinnon (Harvard 1987). **7** *Culture of Complaint*, Robert Hughes (Oxford 1993) **8** *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, Michael J Sandel (Cambridge 1982). **9** *The End of History and the Last Man*, Francis Fukuyama (Penguin 1992). **10** *Sex, Art and American Culture*, Camille Paglia (Viking 1992). **11** *Four Essays on Liberty*, Isaiah Berlin (Oxford 1969). **12** See Zia Sardar book review page 32

A **car** named **desire**

Liberty and the automobile have a strangely intimate relationship. ***Stephen Hill*** *analyses it.*

FROM the vantage point of the sky, several thousand feet above the earth, they look like a trail of ants – ubiquitously swarming, travelling in a line single and double file, hunkered down in metallic exoskeletal frames. Indeed, they are the insects of the modern industrialized world – the automobile.

Automobiles swarm all over the globe and its various ecosystems, from the Trans Amazonian highway, splitting the jungles of Brazil, to Desert Storm tanks tearing up the fragile Arabian desert, to stealthy Land Rovers carrying murderous poachers across dry African savannahs, searching for illegal bounty. Indeed, automobiles of one sort or another have made inroads into the furthest human reaches, from the powdery dust of the moon to the frozen tundra of the Antarctic. They have allowed humans to boldly go where humans had never gone before.

No wonder cars loom large in the psyche of industrialized countries as one of the embodiments of the Western ideal of liberty. And the terrain of this liberty is wider than mere geography, as the simple urgings of any hot-rodding teenager can testify: a 'hot set of wheels' purring beneath their love seat and the windows rolled down letting 'the wind whip back their hair', as in the popular Bruce Springsteen song *Thunder Road*.

Human aspirations in the post-war world have been mirrored by the automobile and its promise of liberty. The car arouses thrills and chills and the freedom of the open road. It promises the unfenced frontier, now that the last outpost of the American West and the Australian Outback have been settled. The plodding covered prairie wagon in search of a staked claim of land has been replaced by the electrifying prospect of a souped-up, racing-striped automobile, roaring down the highway – the 'safety valve' of our world.

Advertisers glamorize and manipulate the unique place of the automobile in the modern psyche. Look at the slogans from these recent ads: 'Infiniti. It's everything that's possible.' 'Yukon/GMC Truck. Makes the most of the 99 percent of the earth that lies unpaved.' 'Mazda. Get off the beaten path without leaving the town.' 'BMW. The Ultimate Driving Machine.' 'Chevrolet Corvette. The Heart and Soul of Performance, Power in the Hands of a Few.' 'Get Your Hands on a Toyota – You'll Never Let Go.'

Advertisers aren't the only media moguls with a finger on this pulse. The popular celebration of the automobile as heroic chariot of liberty is due in no small part to Hollywood and the movies – from James Dean to *Thelma and Louise*. The screech of tyres, the getaway chase scene, smooching teenagers in the back seat of their parents' car with the radio blaring rock-n-roll, hitchhikers on the road to anywhere – all

JULIO ETCHART

MICHEAL K. NICHOLAS / MAGNUM

JULIO ETCHART

JULIO ETCHART

Wings of desire in the 1950s mid-West; caged in metal, and imprisoned by pollution in Mexico City; and a dream for sale, everywhere.

are familiar celluloid images etched permanently in the memories of millions.

And as the teens grow into adults, their measure of success becomes one of having a split-level bungalow in the suburbs or a cottage in the country, a good job in the city or town, and lots of horses under the hood to make the trip. Reality begins to mirror the fantasy and vice versa, in a convoluted interplay of choices.

It's not a big mystery why the automobile should be so closely linked to liberty. The ability to be mobile and to travel at will is the end product of a long democratic march. It used to be that only the rich could afford to be mobile; political representation in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century democracies were often limited to those who had the leisure and the financial means to travel great distances to the legislature – not always a mean feat. Now the ability to get around in a car is a *sine qua non* of modern life, as essential to one's maintenance as eating, drinking and breathing.

Both liberty and automobiles are theoretically available to all, but in fact 'for sale' to the highest bidder. Exalted status is connoted by the ownership of the 'right' automobile, such as a Mercedes, Rolls Royce, Cadillac or a Jaguar. It's a statement to the world about the amount of liberty one has at one's disposal. Poor people are looked down on for the jalopies they drive, even though a few bumps and bounces aside, it can get them from point A to point B as directly as a Lamborghini. There is no equality in the ownership of autos; while some can afford to burn the hydrocarbons in a $80,000 Porsche Carrera, many poorer citizens actually go carless, to their inconvenience and economic detriment. Yet there is no car 'welfare' programme, because while transportation is a modern-day necessity, it is thought of as one you must earn.

Noses to the grindstone, wage labourers strive daily to earn their liberty and their autos. In the free marketplace, nothing is free. And many people do earn their autos of course. Millions of them. As we examine the smog-filled cities of the world, with their auto-choked, bumper-to-bumper, congested rush-hour traffic, nowhere may we find a better example – or a better metaphor – that too much of a good thing can backfire. Each individual chases her or his own private liberty, driving their heroic chariots in a relentless pursuit of their own private happiness. Meanwhile the skies that oxygenate us become choked with the fumes that can kill us. Temperatures rise from a global greenhouse effect. Tempers also rise on jammed highways, and in extreme cases frustrated auto-cowboys have shot it out over the heads of terrorized motorists.

In a relentless pursuit of liberty, billions of people and their autos are boxing each other in ever more tightly as traffic snarls into jumbled metal piles. It's as if liberty is a finite quantity and there are too many chasing it for their own self-interested ends. And as some grab far too much of it others end up with too little, all of us fighting over what's left. Too many automobiles, too much traffic, too much smog – too much liberty.

Too much liberty? Is that possible? Isn't liberty one of the great philosophical underpinnings of Western-style democracies and free market economies? Isn't it this liberty that has given industrial countries their highly vaunted standard of living, including one of its most flamboyant symbols, the automobile?

The Western milieu in which liberty, democracy and free markets have flourished hasn't much changed the ancient formula of 'survival of the fittest' and the 'law

of the jungle'.

Too much liberty leads to nations addicted to the oil that is the lifeblood of their automobiles. This is the difference between the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, which culminated in the Gulf War, and the penetration of Bosnia by Serbian forces, which has led to comparatively little action by the international community. The difference is that, in the case of Iraq's seizure of Kuwaiti oil, the petrol-dependent liberty of Western countries was threatened, while little is disturbed by the massacres in Bosnia, other than a guilty conscience or two.

At its simplest, the contradiction between automobiles and liberty boils down to this: automobiles have increased many times faster than our ability to absorb them. We cannot build enough roads to accommodate them, or enough waste dumps to dispose of them and their discarded rubber tyres, dirty oil and other toxic fluids. Despite government attempts at regulation, the air quality of major cities continues to degenerate as hydrocarbons like rapacious computer Pac-Men gobble up the ozone. There is not enough physical space on Earth for all our auto needs, nor enough wisdom to navigate the minefield of geo-political vagaries of who controls that oil.

The party is over, say environmentalists. Global warming, deforestation, oil depletion, acid rain, ozone holes, oil spills like the Exxon Valdez in Prince William Sound and the 'Mother of All Oil Spills' during the Gulf War, have all taken the fun out of jetting down the highway in a jazzy Maserati. Our lust for liberty has crashed headfirst into the limitations of our planet to sustain several billion of us, pursuing our own privatized notion of that liberty. Could it be then, that our conception of liberty must change?

An alternative concept of liberty would balance the rights of the individual or corporation against the rights of the larger community for a healthy, sustainable future. Individuals need to be mobile and free to pursue their wealth and happiness, but we also need to preserve our environment, not just the natural environment but also the aesthetic and architectural environments that are being strangled by python-like ribbons of concrete and steel highways. The world is getting uglier and more crowded. The effects on our short- and long-term mental and physical health are immeasurable.

Our love affair with the auto, and with the liberty it reifies, makes it difficult to apply logical solutions to the problems it has created. What if we were to take the same genius and wealth, the same vast human and material resources, that we invest every day in the construction of armies and weapons of destruction, and applied them instead to the construction of the safest, most convenient, energy-efficient and environmentally-benign transportation system that humans have ever known? We have the technology, we have the genius and material resources. Now all we need is the will to use them wisely. ■

Stephen Hill is a widely published writer, poet, reviewer and activist, living in Seattle, US. He inspired us to do this issue of **NI**.

The worker

THE familiar whirring sound of the clocking-on machine filled the air. For what seemed like the millionth time I inserted my card into the grey, intimidating box. Clock number 198. Like old soldiers whose army number is etched in their brains forever, clock number 198 would serve as a permanent reminder of my days in the factory. Punching the card I turned and entered the building.

The sheetmetal factory I'd worked in for 14 years hadn't burnt down overnight. No mysterious arsonist had struck a blow for the downtrodden working masses, or more significantly, downtrodden me.

'Good morning,' I grunted to a colleague who queried, 'What's good about it?'

Another bloody day.

Donning my grease-caked overalls I looked around the windowless tomb that masqueraded as a factory. On the journey to work the clouds had threatened rain. Inside these walls, the weather had no significance. You couldn't see it.

Here the only thing that mattered was time. The huge clock on the wall was both your enemy and your friend. At eight o'clock it scowled, at five o'clock its face smiled and shone as though sunrise had appeared at the end of the day.

The walls of the cave were washed white and machines were scattered across the floor like giants in slumber. How many times had I looked upon this scene? How many times had I thought upon this existence as some kind of living death? But what of my comrades with whom I shared this hell?

There they were. My fellow workers. Some whistling merrily as others discussed the previous night's TV programs. Some mulled over horses they fancied at that day's racing at Chepstow. All apparently eager to begin the daily grind of mind-numbing drudgery.

Their contentment was always a source of wonder to me. How resigned they were to this life, accepting that the only way out was to win the football pools. They talked as though they were free but they were latter-day peasants whose rulers had allowed them a token affluence. Duped, patronized and brutalized, they had been bought off. But

NICK HEDGES

what price had they paid? What would they endure before they said, 'enough'?

Inwardly screaming at the absurdity of it all, I pounded the green start button on my machine. Immediately its grinding, crunching sounds obliterated the inanity around me.

Another day. But a new face. Dave.

He'd been with us just a few weeks. Seventeen years old. A self-confessed macho man. A football hooligan, arrogant, cocky and intimidating. He was bursting with the confidence of youth.

'This is a shit place, Hughesy,' he asserted.

It was difficult to disagree with the sentiment but I ignored his endeavours to engage me in conversation and continued to punch my zillionth hole in my zillionth piece of metal.

'How do you put up with it?' he persisted.

'What else is there?' I carped, wishing he would find someone else to annoy.

'Well, I'm fucked if I'll put up with it. I'm an anarchist. I'm free!'

Ignoring my silence he continued to warm to his theme.

'I do what I like; nobody tells me what to do.'

My God, a fucking libertarian. That's all I needed.

Still it was an interesting idea. Here I was, chained to my machine for the rest of my life, doomed to wage slavery. No respite. Perhaps the odd holiday in Margate, then retire with a state pension at 65 – if I lived that long.

I could see no way out of this nightmare, yet here was a rebel, outside the system, declaring his freedom and liberty.

'I'm confused,' I said, 'how are you free?'

The enquiry halted his line of thought and he rocked back on his heels as though I'd hit him between the eyes. He bristled menacingly, searching for an answer.

'Look,' I said calmly, 'you clock on with the rest of us, get paid with the rest of us and when the boss says jump, you say 'how high?' with the rest of us. You make a lot of noise but you play by the rules. Your notion of liberty and freedom exists only in your head. In reality you're as trapped as the rest of us'.

He muttered an obscenity and started his machine.

Just a few weeks ago I heard Dave was still clocking on – aged 37.

Alan Hughes escaped the factory to do a degree in Visual Communications. He now works as a designer at **NI**.

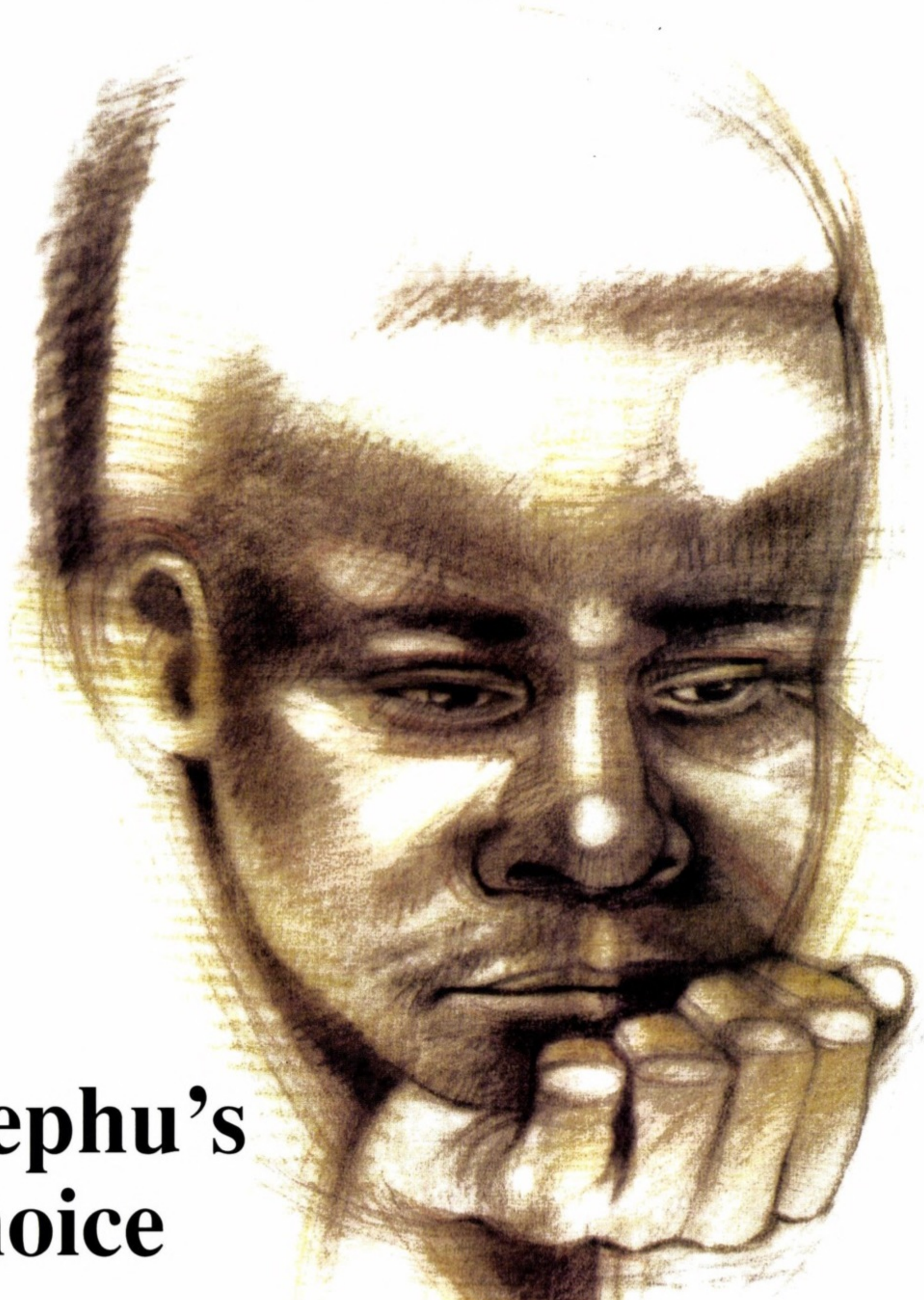


ILLUSTRATION: ALAN HUGHES

Cephu's choice

Is it natural for human beings to want personal liberty? Or is it a peculiarly Western concern? ***Nancy Scheper-Hughes*** *draws some conclusions from indigenous cultures around the world.*

IMAGINE a small clearing in the Ituri forest of Zaire. A band of Mbuti pygmies are returning from a hunt. The women have run ahead of the game nets carried by the men to beat the ground and the bushes, terrifying small animals so that they rush blindly and headlong into the traps. The game, collectively caught, is carefully redistributed at the base camp.

But one of the hunters, wily Cephu, has cheated. Running ahead of the group he captured some of the game before they ran into the nets, and Cephu and his wife enjoyed the advantage of an early meal. Found out, Cephu is punished, told that if he does not wish to behave like a human being, that is, like a Mbuti – he is free to go his own way...alone. In other words, Cephu is banished.

But before two nights pass the hunter crawls back to the base camp, shamefaced and repentant. He has learned the lesson: outside the band there is only the 'freedom' of hunger, fear and isolation. Mbuti conceptions of liberty paradoxically imply constraint. Here, liberty means the relative freedom from danger and scarcity through participation in a closed and demanding but reciprocal human community.

This vignette – recounted by Colin

ILLUSTRATIONS: ALAN HUGHES

Turnbull in his anthropological classic 'The Forest People' – reveals a basic paradox in the nature of human freedom. Humans are among the most social of creatures while yet the most self-consciously aware of, and tormented by, the limitations that living in social groups demand. 'Man [sic] is double,' wrote sociologist Durkheim. 'Individual and social', and there is the rub. Human aspirations for liberty and independence are founded on bio-evolutionary constraints that we are not free to reject, except at a very high cost. These constraints are more visible in small-scale, non-Western societies where human survival is completely dependent on an immediate and balanced reciprocity that requires the subordination of individual goals and desires to larger collective needs.

I think, for example, of a poignant scene from Napoleon Chagnon's ethnographic film, 'The Feast', about the Yanomani Indians who inhabit a remote corner of the Amazon near the Brazilian border with Venezuela. Fierce raids by renegade bands, as well as by Brazilian miners, have forced the Yanomani into new allegiances with former enemies. The film captures the scene of a three-day feast of dance, food and gift-exchange that symbolizes and solidifies the new bond of trust forged between two former enemy bands.

The headman of the host village calls on each of his fellows to come forward and 'offer up' a prized possession which is given to a member of the other band. One elderly man cowers in the back of the circle of squatting men holding tight to his pet dog, a mangy mut. But then he, too, is called forward by the headman to surrender his pet as a peace offering. The man hesitates and cries out in protest. 'No, I don't want to give up my dog!' He jumps up and stamps his foot in anger.

No one says a word, but all stare at the old man fixedly until he realizes that no one is about to support him and he reluctantly hands over his dog to a man from the other band. As he returns to his place in the circle, the old man shakes his head sadly and mumbles, 'I better get something good next time'.

There never was a 'noble savage' living as a free spirit in an enviable 'state of nature'. On the contrary, many traditional societies lack a conception of liberty altogether for this requires a notion of 'the person' or 'the individual' and thereby 'the self'. Such ideas are often either absent entirely or weakly defined.

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz has argued that Western conceptions of 'the person' as a bounded, unique and separate entity and 'the self' as a dynamic centre of awareness, emotion, judgement and action are actually rather peculiar notions within the context of world cultures. In many traditional societies, instead of individuals there are roles and statuses which particular actors may inhabit for a time but which are eventually passed on to the next 'occupant' of the role. What is valued in collectivist societies is continuity and repetition, not individuation and difference. The western idea of 'liberty' was developed to protect the latter values and has little meaning in the former.

In western industrial societies individual personal names have an almost sacred quality and are endowed along with rights of 'personhood' on every infant at birth. But babies in many traditional and peasant societies may go unnamed for the first several months or even years of their lives during which time they are called by such nondescript pet names as 'baby', 'sugar' or 'little bit of nothing'. When finally named they may be given a generic name – such as 'Mary' anywhere in the Catholic world – or be called by some version of 'first-born' or 'number one' or 'last-born'. This draws attention to the infant's social status rather than to any particular quality of the child as a 'person'.

Perhaps the highest praise accorded to a child in such collectivist societies is to be named simply 'man' or 'human being' as was Ishi, the celebrated last surviving 'wild' Californian Indian, or the late South African founder of the Black Consciousness Movement, 'Stephen' Biko. His actual given name at birth was 'Bantu', simply meaning 'man' or 'people' and the legacy of his personal name was a source of strength to Stephen who sometimes – and only partly in jest – referred to himself by the rather blasphemous term 'son of man'.

Finally, in rural Northeast Brazil, where death claims a great many infants, a newborn is often given the name of the last child that died in the family. This emphasizes the essential social principle that while family and communities are permanent, individual actors are replaceable. The saying 'you can't take it with you when you die' applies equally in these societies to a notion of 'the self'.

Traditional and collectivist views of naming fly directly in the face of western notions of individual human rights exemplified in Article 7 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which reads: 'The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a personal name'. Though seemingly innocuous and self-evident, this article actually stands in flagrant disregard and opposition to the way many non-western people view the meaning of human life and death.

The Zinacanteco Mexican Indians think of each 'new' person as not new at all but

rather as a composite, made up of 'soul stuff' borrowed from a repository of the souls of deceased ancestral Zinacantecos. At death the soul leaves the body and returns to whence it came – a kind of soul bank kept by the gods. This spiritual reservoir is used for the creation of new human beings, each of whom is made up of at least 13 parts from the souls of former living persons. There is no sense that each Zinacanteco infant is brand new or a totally unique individual. Rather, each person is but a fraction of the whole Zinacanteco spiritual and social world. This means that individual 'claims' and demands are not backed up by the cosmological system which support instead a sort of tyranny of the collective, which anthropologist Laura Nader has labelled 'harmony ideology'. Freedom is sacrificed for equality, and the seemingly easy and natural consensus that is reached is often forced and extracted through subtle forms of threat and group pressure – a common feature of collectivist societies, whether traditional or modern.

Among Australian aborigines of the Western Desert, each new person comes into the world circumscribed by ancestral origin myths about 'Dreamtime' which structure the world and rigidly define the place of all aboriginal people within it. The myths determine each person's position and the marriage strategies, kinship ties and friendship alliances that each must pursue in adherence to the sacred geography and its accompanying moral economy. 'The Dreaming', wrote William Stanner, 'determines not only what life *is*, but also what it *can* be. Life, so to speak, is a one-possibility thing'. In this aboriginal society there is no sense of personal 'agency' fundamental to western notions of liberty and democracy. Nor is there any idea of an individual search for personal salvation which Christian missionaries have tried, but normally failed, to communicate.

Even more striking, however, are Australian aboriginal ways of death. Neither individual biology nor personal choice decides the time of a person's death, which is also collectivized. Harry Eastwell, a psychiatrist practising for a time in the Western Desert in remote outpost clinics,

'It's often safer to be in chains than to be free.'

Franz Kafka

discovered that certain old and enfeebled persons die according to a social script that is initiated by a collective 'sing'. When the old or sick person hears the songs that foretell his or her passage to the next world, he or she suffers a 'mortification' process. This begins with a separation from the group (usually by lying at a slight distance, alone on a mat in the sun), moves towards a psychological acquiescence to death, and concludes with the death itself, normally due to dehydration.

Here, the social group decides the timing of the death and the individual is expected to conform graciously and to express the sentiment that: 'This is, indeed, a good time to die'. From social birth to social death, the trajectory of the aboriginal person's entire life course is predetermined. No wonder the crude designs to assimilate such peoples into Western culture have failed.

However, even in the most collectivist human societies individuals still have choices and exercise certain liberties. Marriages may be prearranged for Kalahari San or Mbuti pygmy girls against their wishes. But they can still make life so miserable for the unwanted spouse that he leaves the hut, so the girls can then chose a subsequent partner for themselves. Similarly, Australian aboriginal youths born into one camp can, when they reach adolescence, move freely among different camping groups and choose a marriage partner for themselves – as long as she fits the general design of the Dreamtime myths.

Small-scale, collectivist societies like the Mbuti Pygmies, the Kung San and the Australian first peoples are often romanticized as harmonious, balanced and egalitarian – and they are. But, as I have tried to show, this harmony is extracted at a high, personal cost, in the absence of or with a low price placed on personal liberty. In putting individual bodies, desires and goals at the disposal of the group such societies necessarily do violence to Western notions of bodily integrity, habeas corpus, personal autonomy and free choice.

Australian aboriginal peoples – and many highland New Guinea groups too – practice severe forms of penile mutilation, slashing open the urethra, scourging it with abrasive stalks of grass, mutilating the glans or infibulating it. The purpose is to initiate young men to collective life by inscribing the discipline of the group onto the docile flesh of new recruits. Similarly brutal practices of female circumcision – particularly Sudanese 'infibulation' by means of which young girls are made 'women' by cutting away the 'unsightly' clitoris and both sets of labia – have been criticized by human rights and feminist organizations. But the liberal and progressive world has been strangely silent when the body in question and under the knife has been male.

The very severity of these body rituals – and these are the most extreme examples – are intended to remind young initiates of the awesome primacy of the Body Social over the Body Individual. When indigenous people defend their initiation practices against the liberal, democratic dictates that attempt to abolish or modify them, the traditionalists assert the symbolic and religious charters upon which the rites are based. What ensues is a fundamental and irreconcilable clash of cultures – one modern, individualist and secular, the other 'traditional', collectivist and sacred. It is another version of the dialectic between liberty and equality that Alexis de Tocqueville identified in his travels through America in the 1830s, a dialectic that has tended to be resolved over time in defense of liberty and at the expense of equality in the US.

The dialectic between freedom and equality on the one hand and individual autonomy and collective harmony on the other, remains an unfinished and perhaps irresolvable human project. Human societies and cultures are essentially variable and highly resistant to a single definition of 'the good'. While attempts at building cross-cultural charters and constitutions that promote human rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness are laudable, one should keep in mind that these values may be in contention. The very idea of freedom is culturally shaped, historically situated and highly specific: it can never be reduced to a single, essential or universal meaning. ■

Californian writer and anthropologist **Nancy Scheper-Hughes** is currently Visiting Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Cape Town.

Simply...

LIFE IN THE DAY OF Betty Liberty

"BORN FREE AND EVERYWHERE IN CHAINS" IS HOW FRENCH PHILOSOPHER **JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU** DESCRIBED THE HUMAN CONDITION. WHAT COULD HE HAVE MEANT?

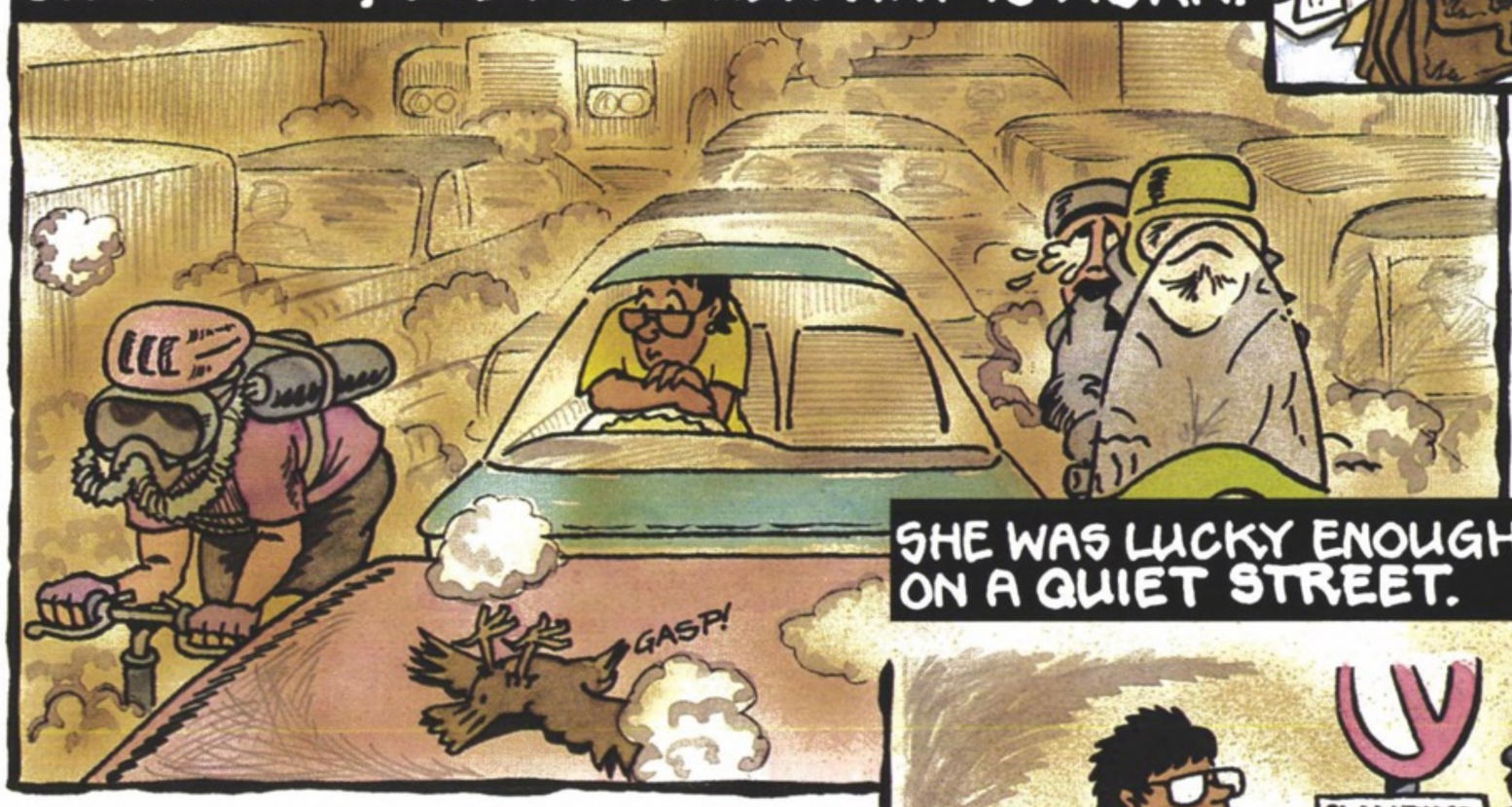
IT WAS ANOTHER DAY IN THE **LAND OF THE FREE** FOR **BETTY LIBERTY**. THE MORNING STARTED IN THE PRIVACY OF HER OWN ROOM WITH HER FAVOURITE TUNE.

FREEDOM OF PRIVACY

THAT MORNING'S MAIL BROUGHT PLENTY OF **FREE INFORMATION**.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

ENJOYING THE FREEDOM AFFORDED BY CAR OWNERSHIP, SHE MADE HER WAY TO WORK.



FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

SHE WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO FIND A PARKING PLACE ON A **QUIET STREET**.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

HER BOSS WAS WELCOMING AND HER PUPILS KEEN TO SEE HER.

SHE CAME HOME TO A CHEERFUL COLLECTIVE HOUSEHOLD WHERE HER FRIENDS WERE CONTEMPLATING THEIR ELECTORAL PRIVILEGES.

FREEDOM FROM HARASSMENT

FREEDOM TO VOTE

FREEDOM OF SPEECH

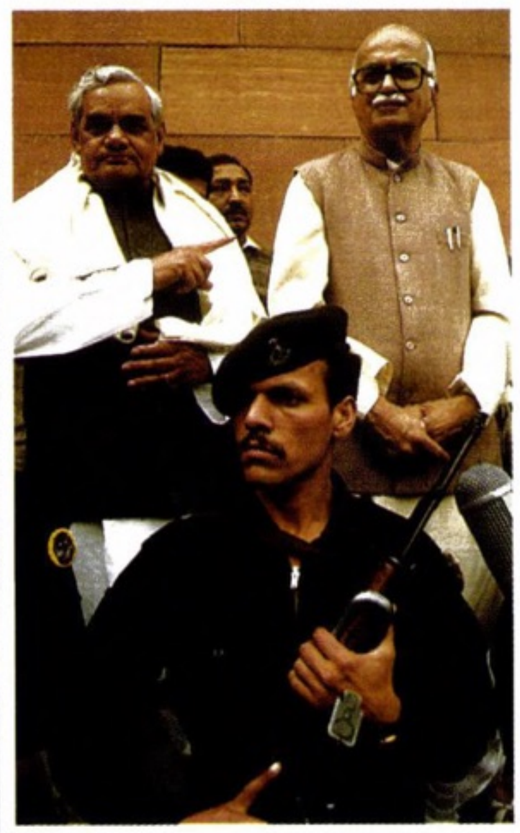
THERE WAS A PROGRAMME ABOUT REFUGEES WHICH ENABLED PEOPLE TO EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS ON THIS GROWING PROBLEM.

AND THEN SHE HAD AN UNEXPECTED PHONE CALL FROM AN OLD FRIEND.

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

CARTOON: BRICK

BRUNO BARBEY / MAGNUM



R. RAI / MAGNUM

PETER MARTENS / MAGNUM

Hidden gags

It's easy to talk about 'free speech' – if you have it. ***Urvashi Butalia*** *explains how cultural imperialism silences most of India's people.*

Recycling oppression: a day at the races for Delhi's élite; the strong arm of Hindu fundamentalism; but women are finding their tongues and their feet.

MANJULA PADMANABHAN is one of India's few women cartoonists. She usually has trouble placing her work. This is partly because she is a woman and her work is about women, not about 'hard' political stories which are the stuff of most cartoons. But it is also because most newspapers prefer to buy syndicated Beetle Bailey, Peanuts or Garfield comic strips which are available at half the price they would have to pay a local cartoonist.

Recently Manjula came up against another problem. At an international cartoon exhibition on 'herstory' she found that almost every cartoonist had chosen to interpret the theme in terms of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, using its creation myths. It was as if no other history, mythology or religion existed. Had Manjula tried to locate her work in Hindu religion, her work would probably have been incomprehensible to many.

If, however, she had gone ahead and used Hindu religion she would have fallen into yet another trap. In the political climate of India today, Hindu fundamentalists have more or less appropriated the Hindu religion, and she would probably have been identified as one of them. Where, she asked, was her freedom to speak as she wished?

And yet Manjula is a woman of considerable privilege: middle class, educated, articulate, well-off. What this incident brought home to her – that freedom of speech is never absolute and that it cannot exist outside a given political context – is something that has long been common knowledge among the poor and the powerless. They know that it is only those who have the power who can afford to speak.

Some years ago a group of tribal women in Bihar, eastern India spoke to an activist and researcher about their struggle for land. They said: 'We had tongues but could not speak. We had feet but could not walk.' Until, that is, a political group came along, helped them to learn about their legal rights and created the conditions for them to fight – successfully – for their right to land. 'Now,' they said, 'we have land and can speak and walk.'

As civil rights activist Swami Agnivesh recently pointed out: the necessary corollary of freedom of speech is the right to information. Only when people are armed with information can they criticize existing systems, struggle, demand and work for change. The example Swami Agnivesh gave was a simple one: why did the Indian Government not simply publicize the minimum wage on television every now and again? If workers knew what wage they had a right to at least they could fight for that. Armed with this knowledge they would be very powerful indeed.

The question then is one of power – and with it the control of knowledge, of how it is produced and how it is disseminated. This power is held internationally by the rich and powerful nations who dictate what people can know or not know. Today's technology has provided astonishing speed and spread to the dissemination of such knowledge. Nationally it is held by upper classes and castes, and within communities and families such power is held by 'elders' and men.

The history of any country provides innumerable examples of this. India is no

exception. It was the Christian missionaries who, by bringing printing into India and associating it with the 'word of God', successfully marginalized the rich oral cultures of this country. And then a century and a half ago, the British began the process of Europeanization; they called it 'enriching' the minds of Indians. William Bentinck, who in 1835 ruled 'in favour of the promotion of European literature and science' was advised by his Director of Public Instruction, Macaulay, that the 'dialects spoken among the natives in this part of India contain neither literary nor scientific information and are, moreover, so poor and rude that, until they are enriched from some richer quarter, it will not be easy to translate any valuable work into them'.

The empire needed an Indian élite educated in English to help rule. For Indians, once the British left, English remained the language of power and access. English is spoken and read by only two or three per cent of the population. However, it is today the English-educated urban middle class that controls the state apparatus and the media, and it is this class in whose interests it is to elevate the language to a higher status. Thus the process of marginalizing Indian languages and literatures, begun by the British, has been kept alive by a class of Indians. It is precisely these people who can afford to speak about freedom of speech, for it is they who have it. For those who don't, things are not that easy.

Who, then, gets left out of the equation? The poor, the illiterate, the powerless, the marginalized. Each society produces its own marginals, different people in different contexts: blacks, homosexuals, tribals, indigenous peoples, women, minorities. For another corollary of freedom of speech is that there must also exist the ability to listen, the openness to hear, the need and ability to allow for dissent and criticism. And at this level all societies fail somewhere, whether it is a white society denying a voice to the blacks, male society denying a voice to women, or colonial rulers denying a voice to their subjects. This problem, however, is easily circumvented by the powerful – point your finger at the powerless, assign blame there and take attention away from yourself. It is much easier to talk about the unfairness of banning Salman Rushdie than to look at the censorship about the Malvinas/Falklands War or to look at the manipulation of information about the Gulf War.

Nor must freedom of speech be a one-way affair. People may be able to speak all they want, but there must exist an atmosphere in which such free speech is possible. Bal Thackeray, a Hindu fundamentalist leader in Western India, complained vociferously that Indian films were being discriminatory towards the majority Hindu community by showing Muslims in a good light. As things go, Thackeray has the right to say what he feels – and no one needs to agree with it. But when his hired criminals began to attack film personalities and film theatres and force them to withdraw films which do not show Hindus in a good light, they are creating conditions that make it impossible for those involved to speak up. They create fear.

'From our knowledge of the history of man [sic], from our knowledge of the colonial liberation movements, freedom or self-government has never been handed over to any colonial country on a silver platter.'

Kwame Nkrumah

These are not the only ways freedom is denied – there are gentler ways. Nine years ago, when we decided to start publishing books about women our plan to do so was greeted with a great deal of scepticism. 'But do women have that much to say?' we were asked. This was in India. We had a different reaction outside, particularly in the West. We were told how terribly important it was to have something like this in India; after all, Indian women were so oppressed.

Either way you lose out: if we don't have much of importance to say, no-one will bother to listen to us. Or, if we can only talk about our oppression, as if that is our only important reality, then who will listen to us if we talk about anything else, or indeed if we talk only about that?

Implicit also in the rhetoric about freedom of speech is the assumption that it is fine to speak as long as you are speaking of 'good' things or 'sanctioned' things. Those of us who think the right things and say the right things are quick to deny freedom of speech to those who transgress the invisible moral boundaries that we have set for ourselves.

Why do we continue to speak about the freedom of speech or insist on seeing the idea as separate from hard economic, political, historical realities on the ground? Why cannot we think of a more egalitarian speech, a concept that provides the space for different voices, different peoples, different ways of listening and hearing, what one might call plurality and multiplicity of speeches. And it is important to recognize that there can be many different kinds of speech: within feminism, for example, we have begun to recognize and accept this. While we may all broadly believe in the same things, the lives and conditions of white feminists and black feminists, of First world women and Third World women are different. We must address different issues, speak about different things and will have unequal access in being heard.

It is only if we recognize this as a reality, if we accept that we need to have a dialogue, clashes of opinion, and many different voices, that we can really talk about speech being free, egalitarian, open, enriching and therefore transformative. ■

Urvashi Butalia is a founder-editor of the Delhi-based Indian women's publishing house, Kali for Women, which has printed Indian women's writing in their own languages. Some of their titles are also available in translation in conjunction with foreign publishers (see *Worth Reading*)

How FREE are we?

Is there more liberty in the world today than there was ten years ago?

Speech

Glasnost and the lifting of censorship in the former Eastern bloc means that around 370 million people now have access to previously forbidden books, magazines, films and music and can enjoy artistic and political self-expression.

Western news media – mainly owned by a handful of individuals and corporations – have worldwide penetration and can now determine what is 'news' and how it is reported. One of the largest US networks, NBC, is owned by defence contractors General Electric, while another, CBS, has close links with the arms trade. In opposing the Westernization of global culture, Muslim fundamentalists are prepared to take censorship to violent extremes.

Identity

Identity along the lines of ethnic group or religion is no longer repressed as a matter of course in the former communist countries. Such allegiances are recognized and more tolerant attitudes have led to a religious revival.

Ethnic chauvinism has exploded in Europe with appalling consequences in several republics including Georgia, Azerbaijan and the former Yugoslavia; 200,000 have died and two million been displaced as a result of ethnic violence in Bosnia alone.

Movement

The opening up of borders within Europe has led to far greater freedom for Europeans – especially those from the East. Hundreds of thousands have migrated in search of a better life elsewhere, with around 500,000 migrating each year from the former Soviet Union.

The number of refugees in the world has more than doubled in the past 10 years. There are now 18 million refugees and 20 million displaced people, forced to flee their homes because of war, famine, poverty and environmental damage. The worst affected are people living in Africa, south-west Asia and the Middle East.

Equality

Peace looks more likely in the Middle East, following the Israeli/Palestinian accord brokered in Norway. Apartheid is being dismantled in South Africa and the 80-per-cent black population is gradually becoming enfranchised. In many parts of the world women's access to education and their share of the labour market have grown. In some European countries children have gained significant legal rights, including protection against corporal punishment.

Racist violence is growing in Europe. Women have been the first to suffer from the global economic recession as they work longer hours in marginal jobs and are paid less than men. Street children are at greater risk than ever, especially in Brazil and Guatemala, where they have become a target for police death squads. Child pornography and prostitution is on the rise.

Democracy

Many countries have moved from either dictatorship or one-party state systems to a multi-party parliamentary system with elections. In the past 10 years this has happened in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, the Philippines, Zambia, Mozambique, and the former Soviet states.

Many Third World countries that have followed the Western democratic route have become more dependent on Western aid and been forced to adopt IMF policies. Political cynicism has replaced opposition in countries like Pakistan, Kenya and Peru where democracies are sham or elections are rigged and human-rights abuses are rife.

Economy

Economic liberalization in China, India, Vietnam and the former Eastern bloc means that hundreds of thousands of people can now do business, can be commercially creative and can develop new trade links and foreign investment opportunities.

The gap between rich and poor is widening in countries such as China, India and Mexico as their governments pursue economic liberalization or free-trade agreements with the rich world. Employment and health care suffer, unions are de-recognized and globalization provides multinationals with cheap, flexible workers.

ILLUSTRATION: PETER FIRMIN

Sex and freedom

In one camp is the anti-censorship lobby. In the other, anti-pornography activists. ***Catherine Itzin*** *charts a path through the impasse in the debate on sexually explicit material.*

'I CAN'T define pornography,' said a Supreme Court judge, 'but I know what it is when I see it.' Indeed. Most people do. Pornography is an industry which manufactures and markets a very profitable product and the people who make it, sell it, buy it and use it know exactly what it is. So why has the belief been fostered that it is somehow indefinable and that defining it for purposes of legislation would be difficult or impossible?

One of the main reasons is because pornography has traditionally been seen in terms of 'morality'. The laws against pornography were – and in the UK still are – 'obscenity laws'. And the definition of obscenity is vague, subjective, and reflects little more than the dominant mores and values of the day.

Art and literature have been censored by means of these laws. Homosexuality – whether lesbian or gay – has been, and still is, regarded as inherently obscene. In 1936 Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* was declared obscene because it dealt with lesbianism. Nearly 50 years later, in 1984, the London bookshop Gay's the Word was prosecuted and 800 items seized on the same grounds. Among the titles were works by Oscar Wilde, Kate Millet and Jean Genet – books that would have merited no legal action had they been heterosexual.

The irony is that while obscenity legislation can lead to censorship of non-pornographic material it poses no real threat to pornography itself. If anything it protects it. Obscenity laws look to see if men are or the moral fabric of society is 'depraved and corrupted'. It does not look at pornography from the position of women and children. If it did, it would see that this is not an issue of morality but of power, sexual objectification, subordination, sexual violence and inequality eroticized.

You don't have to look far to find the evidence. The top shelves of newsagents or supermarkets are stocked with mainstream, so-called 'adult' magazines containing photographs of women's vaginas and anuses, pulled open and posed gaping for the camera, inviting penetration. There are forms of technically legal child pornography where women have their pubic hair shaved and are posed to look like little girls. There is also sexual violence, with women being humiliated, whipped and beaten. Illegal pornography also circulates – sold from under the counter. This features women bound and gagged, raped and tortured; burnt on their breasts and genitals with cigarettes, labia nailed to the top of a table, hanging by their breasts from meat hooks, disembowelled and murdered – in 'snuff' pornogaphy.

'Pornography and the small idea of 'liberty' are opposed to that of liberation.'
Susan Griffin

Obscenity legislation looks at this and, because it sees nakedness and genitals, sees just 'sex'. Take pornography out of the moral realm and place it in the context of the structures of power, and you will find that it is not impossible to define at all. Indeed lawyer Catharine MacKinnon and writer Andrea Dworkin came up with a workable legal definition at the request of the City Council of Minneapolis. Pornography, they say, is graphic, sexually explicit and subordinates women. It also presents women in one or more of the following eight conditions of harm:

- *dehumanized as sexual objects, things or commodities*
- *as sexual objects who enjoy humiliation or pain*
- *as sexual objects who experience sexual pleasure in rape, incest or other sexual assault*
- *as sexual objects tied up, cut up or mutilated or bruised or physically hurt*
- *in postions and postures of sexual submission, servility or display*
- *being penetrated by objects or animals*
- *in scenarios of degradation, humiliation, injury and torture*
- *shown as filthy or inferior, bleeding, bruised, hurt in a context that makes these conditions sexual*
- *with their body parts (including vaginas, breast, buttocks or anuses) exhibited such that women are reduced to those parts.*

Although this definition is based upon

Seamy spread in Eastern Europe (above) while British judges (renowned for curb-crawling activities) find no link between pornography and sexual inequality.

the treatment of women it also applies to children or men or transsexuals – and so it covers paedophilia and violent or subordinating gay pornography.

And here we come to the billion dollar question: can pornography be shown to actually cause harm?

If we look at the experience of women working within the pornography industry, we find chilling accounts of sexual murder, rape, coercion. The case of Linda Marchiano – who under the name of Linda Lovelace was the 'star' of the 1970s porn film Deep Throat – is especially poignant. Linda – presented in the film as 'liberated' and with an insatiable appetite for fellatio – was held captive for two years under threat of death by her boss Charles Traynor. During the filming of Deep Throat she was hypnotized to suppress the normal gag response. She was tortured horribly when she tried to escape, was never let out of Traynor's sight and, at gunpoint, suffered innumerable other indignities. When she finally escaped and told her story, it was echoed by that of a great many other women involved in the pornography business.

But what about the men who use pornography? Do they treat women any differently as a result? A plethora of social science research carried out by male academics in Canadian and US universities shows that pornography desensitizes men, makes them find their sexual partners less desirable and inclines them to believe that women are less deserving of equality. Men who use pornography become less sympathetic to rape victims, more sympathetic to rapists and report an increase in their own likelihood of committing rape.

According to Edward Donnerstein, a leading researcher in the field: 'the relationship between sexually violent images in the media and subsequent aggression and... callous attitudes towards women is much stronger statistically than the relationship between smoking and cancer'.

Pornography can be divided into three categories. One, the sexually explicit and violent. Two, the sexually explicit and non-violent but subordinating and dehumanizing. Three, the sexually explicit material which is non-violent and non-subordinating which is based on mutuality and which can be called 'erotica'. Research consistently shows that the first two result in negative attitudes and behaviour but the third – erotica – is harmless.

Then there is the evidence of sex offenders. In Canadian research a third of the rapists and half of those who committed child sexual abuse said they deliberately used pornography in preparation for committing the offence. Pornography supports distorted belief systems that enable them to rationalize, and justify, their behaviour. Women who have been raped in the US have reported being asked to re-enact scenes from pornography.

Recent government inquiries in different parts of the world – in the US, Australia, Canada, Aotearora/New Zealand – all point in the same direction: dehumanizing and degrading pornography harms women and reinforces sexual inequality. Only a 1990 UK Home Office review could find 'no causal links' – a view that has been vigorously challenged internationally by leading researchers and women's organizations.

So what's the answer? Should there be state censorship of violent and subordinating pornography? I don't think so. Firstly censorship does not work, as the thriving underground pornography market clearly illustrates. Secondly, there are other, better ways which give more power to the people and less to the state.

One proposal is for Sex Discrimination legislation that would enable people who could prove they were victims of pornography-related harm to take action against the manufacturers and distributors of pornography. This would not ban the publication of pornography and it would give no power to the state to censor.

Another proposal is to use the UK Race Relations Act as a model for legislating against pornography which could be shown to have contributed to the incitement of sexual hatred and violence. Race hatred literature is illegal because of the 'identifiable harm' it causes to ethnic minorities. Why should not the same thing apply to women and pornography, using MacKinnon and Dworkin's definition?

None of this could guarantee the elimination of sexism and sexual violence any more than the abolition of slavery ended racism and racial violence. But like pornography today, black slavery in the US was a major international profit-making industry – and it was ended.

There are certain 'freedoms' that people have agreed to forgo because of the damage and harm they do to other people. These include the freedom to steal, to assault, to rape, to murder, to incite racial hatred and discrimination and to discriminate in employment on the grounds of race or sex.

The freedom to incite sexual hatred, sexual violence and sex discrimination through pornography is another freedom people should agree to forgo to ensure and safeguard the civil liberties of women. ■

Catherine Itzin is an Honorary Research Fellow at the University of Bradford and is editor and co-author of *Pornography: Women, Violence and Civil Liberties* (Oxford University Press, 1992).

MELANIE FRIEND / FORMAT; MAGGIE MURRAY / FORMAT

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS PICTURES

Father of China's free market, Deng Xiaoping exhorts the virtues of fast money (above). But while 'business fever' has made some rich, millions more are now jobless and homeless on the city streets (right).

And this little **despot** went to **market**

The allure of the 'free market' has turned very sour for millions of Chinese people. Wealth and poverty have been polarized, while the despotic rule of the Party remains intact. ***Ruth Cherrington*** *reports on Deng Xiaoping's curious recipe for freedom.*

'I'LL tell you what is wrong in China today,' says Wang Qi, a striking worker outside his factory gates in Beijing. 'Everything.'

Inflation is hovering around 20 per cent, the economy is overheating dangerously, peasants are rioting and a crime wave is sweeping the country.

The political élite sitting in Beijing need no reminder of the nation's economic woes. But this strike – in the capital – brings their troubles closer to home.

Employees in the state-run cooling machinery factory are in no doubt about who was responsible for the mess. 'The bosses don't know what they are doing,' says Wang Qi. He is referring not only to the factory's management but to the political bosses who have unleashed free market forces upon the country without being able to control the 'contradictions'.

Wang Qi's debt-ridden factory is one of the thousands of nationalized enterprises that failed to move successfully into the private sector and now teeter on the brink of ruin. There is no money for investment in new machinery and managers helped themselves to the funds. Its workers are striking not to improve their conditions but to try and retain some of the basic rights and conditions guaranteed them under the former state-controlled system. They look back with nostalgia to jobs for life, a regular wage, welfare benefits and pensions.

But it is in the countryside that anger against the free market reforms is most dramatic. In the past few months there have been clashes between peasants and police in at least 12 provinces.

In Sichuan province – which pioneered the experiment in rural market forces – farmers attacked post offices in fury when they found out that government IOUs they had received could not be cashed. Then there was the introduction of new local 'taxes' – many of them to fund dubious projects. Peasants in Renshou county received demands for funds for road building. They were not impressed – they did not see any reason why they should foot the bill for such infrastructure. They also suspected the money would find its way straight into the pockets of corrupt officials. Some of those who refused to pay were rough-handled by police, leading to more violence and eventually to the besieging of government offices by 10,000 angry peasants.

Ironically it was the peasants who were the first beneficiaries of Deng's economic reforms, introduced in 1978 with the long-term aim of getting China a central stall in the global free market. The peasants were encouraged to lease land and sell surplus produce. This so-called 'household responsibility system' signalled the break-up of Mao's rural communes all over China. Egalitarianism became a dirty word: allowing some to get rich quick became the official priority. Thousands of rural folk caught the 'business fever' and developed side-line enterprises. A minority class of rich peasants emerged, conspicuously spending their profits on trips to the big cities. The vast majority who could not looked on with envy.

Today farming is increasingly unprofitable, with grain prices falling and inflation forcing up the cost of agricultural inputs. In addition, much land has been lost due to a combination of speculation and soil exhaustion. With few communes left to provide either work or welfare, being jobless now means being penniless. The estimated 12 million rural unemployed represent a tragic failure of Deng's reform programme.

Now hundreds of thousands of peasants, with little more than high hopes and dirty bedrolls, drift into the cities every day, not to buy television sets but in a desperate search for work. Those who do manage to find work are often exploited. Young girls are sold or lured into prostitution – yet another side of the multiplying social problems caused by emphasizing the accumulation of money above all else. The propaganda still stresses China's 'socialist spiritual civilization' but the reality on the streets makes a mockery of the Government's slogans.

Mao Zedong must now be turning in his mausoleum as the social class who helped to put him into power is once more being forced to 'taste bitterness'.

Meanwhile, the party leaders in Beijing are agonizing over ways to apply the brakes to the economy without bringing the reform programme to a complete halt. Pushed forward by the ailing 89-year-old Deng Xiaoping, then slowed down, the uncertain direction of reform means people are simply trying to make a fast 'yuan' where they can. Consumerism and the 'looking towards money craze' are in evidence everywhere, but especially in the cities, where private cars and taxis jam streets where the bicycle used to rule.

'We shall protect free enterprize as the most expedient, or rather the sole possible order.'

Adolf Hitler

Many business deals are shady and officials corrupt. Chinese banking officials are alleged to have siphoned off as much as $30 billion of state funds. Such abuses of power have become part of Chinese-style socialism which Zhu Rongji, the vice-premier and newly-appointed Governor of the central bank of China, is attempting to curb. Appointed by Deng as the economy hit crisis point in the summer he also has to reverse the spate of illicit property speculation and disastrous trading on China's fledgling stock market. He is faced with the task of reining in areas like Canton, reckoned to have the world's fastest growing economy with a 24 per cent a year growth rate. 'He has a tough job,' says Zhang Li, a smartly dressed post-graduate student. But she shakes her head in despair when asked about China's future. 'At the moment we have the worst of both systems without any of the benefits.'

She believes that after the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, intellectuals have put political activity on the back burner. 'Making money, that's the only thing we can think about now. Maybe that alone will bring about democracy.'

That also seems to be the hope of Western governments who after condemning the Beijing massacre quickly resumed business as usual. This they justify as being the only way of introducing the required political reforms into a nation that has so far adamantly resisted any democratic reform.

The equation of democracy with the free market is firmly entrenched. But the case of today's China – and of Pinochet's Chile in the 1970s and 1980s – shows that the two do not necessarily go together. Far from it. Political dissenters or workers who try to organize independent unions are likely to find themselves in China's notorious 'laogai' or penal colonies for 'reform through labour'. Here an estimated 500,000 political prisoners suffer extreme abuses of their human rights. Meanwhile profiteering and corruption are poisoning the country's economic development.

The rise of consumer 'choice' in the market place, at least for those who have the cash, has not given rise to a similar 'choice' in the political sphere. The Party, backed by the army, retains its political omnipotence and there is no civil society to provide the necessary checks and balances to its excessive state power.

Deng is worried about how he will go down in history and remains reluctant to 'go to meet Marx' until the success of China's 'socialist market economy' assures him a favourable mention. But as China's experiment in the free market teeters on the brink of disaster, the leadership appears more adept in the use of armed force against protesting workers than at managing the economy. Hong Kong residents can only look on with concern and doubt as China's leaders insist that they will implement the 'one country, two systems' policy when the colony returns to the 'motherland' in 1997.

Deng and his colleagues have shown a frightening willingness to use brutal force to prop up their version of the 'free market'. It will be China's tragedy if they continue to do so. ■

CHRIS STOWERS / PANOS PICTURES

Ruth Cherrington lived in China for several years and is author of *China's Students: the struggle for democracy* (Routledge, London, 1991).

Libertarians come in all guises and may find themselves with surprising bedfellows

In bed with...

FRIEDRICH HAYEK, Austrian-born philosopher, economist and free-market guru.
Favourite position: Firmly tied up to the bedposts of monetarism.
Pet hate: Marx and Freud.
Pillow talk: **'My personal preference is for a liberal dictator and not for a democratic government lacking in liberalism.'**

FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, author of *The End of History* and hot property for post-Cold War, US free-marketeers.
Favourite position: Strictly missionary. Cultural diversity? No way!
Pet hate: Islamic fundamentalism.
Pillow talk: **'The egalitarianism of modern America represents the essential achievement of the classless society envisioned by Marx.'**

CARTOON: KORKY PAUL

MARGARET THATCHER, former British Conservative Prime Minister.
Favourite position: Unbridled capitalism, whipping the unemployed.
Pet hate: The 'loony left', the welfare state.
Pillow talk: **'There is no such thing as society.'**

CAMILLE PAGLIA, US art and popular culture critic.
Favourite position: Kiss-my-ass, playing Madonna for intellectuals.
Pet hate: Women who complain about inequality .
Pillow talk: **'Feminism, with its solemn "carry the Nation" repressiveness, does not see what is for men the eroticism or the fun element of rape...'**

HUGH HEFNER, pornographer and owner of *Playboy*.
Favourite position: Inside a rabbit hutch.
Pet hate: Ex-employees who spill the beans about what really goes on inside the Playboy empire.
Pillow talk: **'I am a feminist... Playboy magazine liberates women.'**

LIBERTY

EQUALITY

Of Big Brother and Buffaloes

Is 'political correctness' Big Brother in drag – or a laudable attempt to give the oppressed a chance? ***Nina Silver*** *takes a level look at the raging storm.*

EVE ARNOLD / MAGNUM

RECENTLY at the University of Pennsylvania, student Eden Jacobowitz, roused from sleep by some noisy, drunken classmates, shouted to the group that they were worse than a herd of water buffalo.

An innocuous remark spouted in the ire of being awakened? That's one side of the story. The other side challenges: Was the remark really innocuous, since everyone in the group was black? The result: this man was censured by the university as racist – while those accusing him of racism were denounced by his supporters as the 'PC police'.

The media in North America – and now increasingly in the UK and Australasia – is abuzz with stories about 'political correctness'. In Hollywood, AIDS activists recently clashed with actors wearing red ribbons to show solidarity for people with AIDS. The activists argued that ribbons defused the seriousness of the issue, lulling people into believing they were fighting AIDS when actually their activity only supported companies making money from ribbons, enamel pins, mugs, and tattoos. Meanwhile, actors sympathetic to the AIDS struggle, but who remained unribboned, were reporting threats and harassment – for not following the 'politically correct' position.

One article, *Navigating the Nineties: a PC Survival Guide*, declared: 'Part of the foundation of PC theory is the belief that every instance of political incorrectness, no matter how small, adds up and is therefore catastrophic. The universe is a philosophical-karmic ecosystem; if you piss in your sink, it will end up in the drinking water in Chile.'[1]

So what does it really mean to be politically correct, and why are we reading so many bad things about it?

The term 'political correctness' probably originated in the 1970s. But according to writer Barbara Epstein, it was widely publicized by the media in October 1990, when the Western Humanities Conference held an interdisciplinary forum entitled *'Political Correctness' and Cultural Studies* at the University of California at Berkeley. She explains that what started

Multiculturalism in schools and colleges ruptured models of racism, sexism and homophobia.

MERYL LEVIN / IMPACT VISUALS

New York lesbians and gays protest at being barred from taking part in a St. Patrick's Day march (above). The many colours of cultural diversity in Harlem (below) and British barristers beating racism and sexism in the law (right).

out as a wry self-deprecating joke on the Left became a rigid standard against which both liberals and conservatives were being measured.

The actual 'politically correct' agenda introduced to the universities consisted of curricula whose values, historical perspectives, and standards were not white, male, and heterosexual. Not only were students exposed to literature that presented the views of people of colour, feminists, and gays; they were also asked to apply this multicultural outlook to how they treated people in their daily lives.

Just as models of racism, sexism, and homophobia were being ruptured – attacks against political correctness started up. One prominent view claimed that so-called radicals, by injecting multiculturalism into the schools, were displacing scholarly 'objectivity' with their own biased orthodoxy. There were reports about how PC behaviour was getting out of hand. Black students at the University of Pennsylvania, reacting to a conservative columnist in the school paper, confiscated 14,000 copies of the publication before it could be distributed. At the University of Wisconsin, a student was suspended simply for telling an Asian-American, 'It's people like you - that's the reason this country is screwed up'.[2]

Some college professors even stopped teaching courses on sensitive topics like race, ethnicity, and sexuality for fear of being fired. If they did teach, they taped the classes in case they were accused of something later. 'Being offended has become a political agenda, even a full-time vocation for some people,' wrote one journalist. 'They are "thought vigilantes" on the prowl to punish people guilty of thinking proscribed thoughts.'[2]

Nor did the fundamentalist Right hold fire. Dr James Dobson, guru of the Christian organization Focus on the Family, contended that 'Traditional standards of morality have crumbled under ... "politically correct" thinking'. And he declared: 'There is no evidence that homosexuals as a class are discriminated against in the present society... they have far higher average income than most Americans, and significant political influence. ...[They] have Hollywood, the press, the media, the universities, the publishers, the professionals and the judiciary enforcing [their] "politically correct" agenda.'[3]

Christians were, he claimed: 'stranded pretty much on their own... our opposition to the gay and lesbian tidal wave is not an expression of hate, but one of social justice and common sense.'

There were some calmer criticisms, like that of Roger Draper, for example. He wrote: 'The heart of the radicals' case is a moral one that cannot be wholly conjured away by a practical argument. For centuries, they tell us, the West has murdered, dispossessed and exploited people of colour, and it is now unworthy of its victims' cultural loyalty. The claim to victimhood is perfectly legitimate. Yet the moral argument is faulty because it is based on a sentimentalized misreading of history. Before the inhabitants of what is today Peru, Ecuador and Bolivia were conquered and oppressed by the Spaniards, they were conquered and oppressed by the Inca. The Aztec empire in Mexico was so intensely hated by its subjects that they provided most of the soldiers Cortes led against Montezuma. Slavery was endemic in West Africa long in advance of the white man's arrival in the fifteenth century, and the international slave trade prominently involved Arabs, Africans and Latin Americans, along with Europeans and North Americans.[4]

In fact, this author continued, if the PC police were realistic, they would admit that 'American blacks often resent Caribbean blacks. Third-generation Japanese-Americans have little in common with recent arrivals from mainland China. Puerto Ricans are sometimes astonishingly hostile to Dominicans.'[4]

This data may be reasonable but it does not demonstrate that efforts to create racial or sexual harmony are invalid – regardless of what did or didn't happen in the past.

Those critics who charge that the 'PC police' are becoming as dictatorial as what they are trying to rectify are ignoring one rudimentary detail: a governing body that routinely and by design discriminates against minorities, and one that attempts to redress the injustices to those minorities through implementing affirmative action, are hardly comparable. The first, which continues to oppress, signifies corruption and cynicism; the second, at worst, merely imprudence.

It is true that misunderstandings happen and PC can run amok. This was, I suspect, the case with Jacobowitz and the water

THOMAS HOEPKER / MAGNUM

buffalo. While supporters of multicultural diversity applauded his censure no-one seemed to take account of Jacobowitz's own Jewish background. Had they, they might have discovered that in Hebrew the word 'behama' – which means water oxen – is slang for 'dolt'.

But, at the heart of 'political correctness' is a desire to ensure equity and tolerance by familiarizing people with viewpoints that do not subscribe to a prevailing powerful norm. If multiculturalism does not assume that all ideas are equal, that is because it's appropriate – and necessary – to favour the 'idea' of equality over that of exploitation.

And equality does not mean a lack of objectivity, or the inability to discern between affirmative action and stultifying codes. Equality means that attempts to remedy situations harming many will inevitably make a few uncomfortable: notably those whose power is based on the subjugation of others. For instance, white men who whine about economic injustice because women and blacks are stealing 'their' jobs are using the attack on political correctness to justify their bigotry and maintaining of the status quo.

Sometimes 'affirmative action' can be taken too far, when oppressed minorities over-identify with their labels. Then, what merely should have corroborated the need for restitution becomes a defensive posture that emphasizes difference, separateness, reinforces alienation – and discrimination. Pride over one's heritage can become a prison.

Yet despite the problems in attaining multiculturalism, this doesn't mean we shouldn't try. We are only at the beginning of a process, and are bound to make mistakes. True, university administrators steeped in a scholarly tradition of linear thinking sometimes exacerbate what they are trying to rectify. But it is also true that the media often presents a partial and distorted picture.

The Left, in its desire to eliminate oppression, has sometimes avoided discussing racially- and sexually-based differences between people for fear of being thought abusive. But those of different races, sexes, and sexual orientations do have disparate experiences and histories. We should be able to discuss social change in relation to these.

RAISSA PAGE / FORMAT

I think that to effectively launch multiculturalism, we must be clear that there is an immense difference between a private conversation and publicly-sanctioned, institutionalised hatred and prejudice. Students should have the right, either publicly or privately, to speak their minds. Tolerance and open-mindedness cannot flourish in the presence of fear. But it is the responsibility of the institutions, the schools and colleges not to maintain prejudice but to provide curricula based on including and appreciating diversity.

Feelings can and will be hurt. But the essence of political correctness is genuine respect for others. We should be able to talk openly about our disagreements and misunderstandings instead of being afraid of them. In that way we can learn where we need to develop tolerance – and discernment.

It helps never to forget to ask: 'Who has the power? Based on the need for *genuine* equality on all levels for everyone, which group is becoming disadvantaged *at this time*, and how can their needs be met?' – for the balance of power constantly shifts and we must be sensitive to who is affected by the changes – and how they are affected by them.

Democracy is a living, breathing thing that transforms with people's needs and conditions of life. Unless those who advocate social change are prepared to deal with the oscillations inherent in any viable social system, they will end up as rigid and intolerant as their critics. ■

New York-based writer and psychotherapist, **Nina Silver**, has a volume of poetry coming out soon, entitled *Birthing* (Woman In The Moon Publications, PO Box 2087, Cupertino, California).

1 *Playboy*, January 1992: Peter N Nelson, 'Navigating the Nineties: a PC Survival Guide,' p111. **2** *Newsweek*, May 31, 1993: George F Will, 'Compassion on Campus,' p66. **3** *Focus on the Family,* August 1993, p10 and July 1993, p7.

Poem about my rights

Even tonight and I need to take a walk and clear
my head about this poem about why I can't
go out without changing my clothes my shoes
my body posture my gender identity my age
my status as a woman alone in the evening/
alone on the streets/alone not being the point/
my point being that I can't do what I want
to do with my own body because I am the wrong
sex the wrong age the wrong skin and
suppose it is not here in the city but down on the beach/
or far into the woods and I wanted to go
there by myself thinking about God/ or thinking
about children or thinking about the world/all of it
disclosed by the stars and the silence:
I could not go and I could not think and I could not stay there
alone
as I need to be
alone because I can't do what I want to do with my own
body and
who in the hell set things up like this
and in France they say if the guy penetrates
but does not ejaculate that he did not rape me
and if after stabbing him if after scream if
after begging the bastard and if after smashing a hammer to his head if even
after that if he
and his buddies fuck me after that
then I consented and there was
no rape because finally you understand finally
they fucked me over because I was wrong I was
wrong again to be me being where I was/wrong
to be who I am

Extracted from 'Poem about My Rights' in *Lyrical Campaign* by **June Jordan** with kind permission of the publishers, Virago (UK).

Worth reading on... liberty

The Myth of the Market by *Jeremy Seabrook*, 1990, Green Books, Bideford, UK. In a style that's immensely readable, he unravels one the most persuasive and corrosive illusions that rule our world and our age: that freedom and market economics somehow go together. **Feminism Unmodified** by *Catharine MacKinnon*, Harvard 1987. This is powerful stuff, MacKinnon applying her legal and academic mind incisively and unswervingly. She's better on theory than popularity - but the sparks fly and the writing gets better when she lets her anger at injustice show. **Democracy and Capitalism** by *Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis*, Basic Books, New York, 1987. A clear and constructive attempt by two political economists to analyze liberalism's failure and suggest how liberty might be deepened and a radical, democratic culture created. **On Liberty** by *John Stuart Mill*, Oxford, 1859. It's a classic. Mill wrote like a humane angel, and – a rarity among fellow liberal thinkers – was actually concerned about the status of women. But the lack of a deeper understanding of the destructive power of patriarchy and imperialism restricts his vision. **Truth Tales**, stories by Indian women, Kali for Women, India, 1987 and the forthcoming **In Other Words**, new writing by Indian women, edited by *Urvashi Butalia* and *Ritu Menon*, Kali for Women, India, 1993. The writing is good, eye- and mind-opening, and the realities are refreshingly not white, male or imperialist. Both titles are available in editions by The Women's Press, London.

Action

THE FOLLOWING GROUPS DEAL WITH CERTAIN ASPECTS OF LIBERTY:

AOTEAROA/NZ: **New Zealand Council for Civil Liberties**, PO Box 337, Wellington. **NCC Program on Racism** PO Box 9573, Auckland. **Women Against Pornography**, PO Box 11 874, Wellington.

AUSTRALIA: **Australian Council for Civil Liberties**, PO Box 201, Glebe NSW 2037. **Campaign Against Racial Exploitation**, PO Box 51, Kensington Park, SA 5068. Women's Liberation Movement Centre, 6 May Street, Hindmarch, SA 5OO7.

CANADA: **Canadian Civil Liberties Association**, 229 Yonge Street, Suite 403, Toronto, Ontario M5B 1N9. **Canadian Ethno-cultural Council,** 1100-251 Laurier Ave.W., Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5J6. **Resources Against Pornography**, Box 695, Stn C, Toronto, Ontario MEJ 351.

UK: **Liberty** (National Council for Civil Liberties), 21 Tabard Street, London SE1 4LA. **Campaign Against Pornography and Censorship**, PO Box 844, London SE5 2QP. **Commission of Racial Equality**, Elliot House, 10/12 Allington Street, London SW1 5EH.

US: **American Civil Liberties Union**, 132 West 43rd St., New York, NY 10036. **Rainbow Coalition**, 2100 M Street NW, Suite 316, Washington DC 20037. **National Anti-Pornography Civil Rights Organization,** PO Box 140, Brooklyn NY 11217.

INTERNATIONAL: **Amnesty International**, 1 Easton Street, London WC IX ODJ, or your national office.

The prisoner

At the age of 44, I was arrested and put into prison for the first time in my life. It was a hard blow. I had hitherto regarded myself as a 'free spirit', priding myself on being able to make up my own mind about issues rather than accept what was said by others. I enjoyed life, especially nature. Walking in local woods and parks was my favourite pastime.

My personal freedom had its financial constraints. In these days of unemployment, how free can one really be from the threat of poverty? But like most people, I took liberty for granted. And I was lucky in that I had a job and a car. The job meant I could afford to keep the car. The car meant I could get to the job.

I never gave a second thought to those in prison. Films and TV programs dealing with prison life just didn't register. I could watch them and remain pretty much devoid of any empathy. 'They probably deserved it,' was my main thought.

But then something went wrong in my life. I was arrested and placed on remand in an allocation prison: 'banged up' in a cell 22 hours a day. I thought it was some kind of nightmare; the uncertainty of what was happening to me a form of mental torture. Whilst awaiting trial I tried to block out the prospect of this existence becoming my reality.

The prison clothes, the food, the noise... all were alien. It was very confusing to no longer have any choice over my actions. I found it especially puzzling that my door was slammed shut on me by someone I didn't know. I awaited the day of my sentencing with the delirious expectation of 'walking', being set free. I needed that freedom.

When the judge pronounced three years, it was like a kick in the stomach. My immediate thought was how old my children would be before I could get to see them again.

But I quickly realised that I was going to have a lot of time on my hands, so I had best put it to good use. I had always considered time idly spent on the outside as something of

EVE ARNOLD / MAGNUM

a luxury. But in the drab environment of prison, time just hangs around your neck like a millstone. What I needed was something to occupy my mind during those long daylight hours.

I decided to learn to type, something I'd always wanted to do. By writing down my feelings about prison, I thought I would understand myself better. I even tried to inject some humour into these writings, but somehow the humour had a hollow ring in this environment. It was sadness that ruled my thoughts.

My naturally ebullient nature has been put on 'hold' in order for me to co-exist with a large number of men with whom I have nothing in common apart from the same address. My impatience with others less quick on the uptake than myself has also been checked. I no longer have the freedom of choice to walk away from any situation that I find unpleasant – and I have taken a bashing on account of this. Voicing my opinions now is subject to the censure of others. My intrinsic nature has been stifled. This is a pity – I used to be lighthearted.

I wish that like Dostoevsky in his prison story *The Peasant Marey*, I could still feel Christian charity for my fellow prisoners, no matter how wretched. Unfortunately, I can't. Sometimes in my cell late at night I suffer a bout of anger and my thoughts tend to revenge rather than remorse. Why should I be denied the sight of a flower, or a plant or a tree? Why am I not allowed to see bright colours like red and orange and yellow? How I would love to be able to walk to the corner shop and back! Losing my freedom is the saddest thing that has happened to me.

But I am amazed at how quickly I have become inured to certain aspects of this loss. Far better the drab clothes I am obliged to wear than none at all. Using a bucket for a toilet is not really humiliating, is it? And whereas I wouldn't eat the diet at first, unappetizing stodge mainly, now I find myself shovelling it down without thinking. I even look forward to the quiet of the cell.

But I hope I never take my liberty for granted again. To breathe fresh air is a wonderful thing. I wish I could do it.

Michael Franklin writes from a prison somewhere in the south of England.

PESTICIDES

PHOTO: FORMAT

No protection from poisons: rural workers find special clothing unbearable.

Green deception

Malaysian groups protest at paraquat promotion

CONSUMER groups in Malaysia are incensed by a series of advertisements for the herbicide Paraquat placed in the local press by the UK chemicals giant ICI. Over a picture of a tropical paradise, the advertisements headline 'Paraquat and nature working in perfect harmony... It's a FACT. PARAQUAT is environmentally friendly.'

The President of the Consumers Association of Penang, SM Mohd Idris, says however that local environmental groups are 'outraged by the "green" deception practised by ICI Agrochemicals'. The World Health Organization classifies paraquat as one of the world's most deadly chemicals. The Pesticide Action Network, a global coalition of citizens' groups who are opposed to the spread and misuse of poisonous pesticides, places paraquat on its Dirty Dozen list of the worst offenders.

A lethal dose for an adult is only one swallow (14 millilitres of a 40 per cent solution). The substance attacks the human liver, kidneys and lungs. Smaller doses can cause stomach aches, vomiting, diarrhoea and general muscle aches, while even at very low levels of exposure the skin can suffer dermatitis, burns and discolouration. There is no known antidote. More than half of all reported paraquat poisonings in Malaysia have been fatal.

Edward Block, a lung specialist at the University of Florida, pinpoints the problem: 'Paraquat is probably the most effective herbicide that exists right now on Earth. It is also one of the world's worst poisons.'

Given these dangers, those who work with it require extensive and expensive protection. Paraquat is being promoted in Southern countries where worker protection is minimal and the essential protective clothing is unbearable to wear.

Its effects spread throughout the ecosystem to humans. A report to the US Environmental Protection Agency found that yearling salmon exposed to paraquat were less likely to survive when placed in the sea water to which they migrate. At doses lower than those used for weed control, paraquat kills honeybees. It is also highly toxic to bird embryos.

The Consumers Association of Penang contends that the ICI advertisement violates the Malaysian Trade Description Act 1972. The Association wants the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs to prosecute ICI Agrochemicals and to ban the advertisement. Paraquat has been withdrawn from the market in Norway, banned in Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands and in Indonesia prohibited except for specific registered uses. ■

Utusan Konsumer, Mid-April, 1993.

Haute khaki

Not exactly Norman Schwarzkopf, but the new two-tone camouflage sported by AWB (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) leader Eugene Terre'Blanche would not have looked out of place in Operation Desert Storm.

Apart from the brownish hues and blotches of the jacket, cap and trousers of the ranks, the leader's outfit has an additional embellishment – gold braid on the cap. Conservative dark suits ruled in the early days of the AWB until Jani Allen – a celebrated exponent of *haute khaki* – reportedly told Terre'Blanche he looked 'like a Jew' in a suit. Khaki rapidly became the official style. But the average AWB member must be nostalgic for the days of Mussolini when all it took to become a reactionary was a black shirt and a Beretta. Full AWB uniform – white baton, boots, rucksack, compass-holder, water bottle and a choice of three different bullet-proof jackets – costs $600. Colour co-ordinated socks are extra.

from Weekly Mail, South Africa, 21 May 1993.

HILTON HAMANN / AMS

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Slippery solution

Mabo case highlights aboriginal land rights.

ABORIGINAL leaders in Australia have rejected the Labor Government's response to the controversial Mabo land-rights case. The High Court ruling in the case of Mabo vs Queensland in June 1992 overturned the assumption that Australia belonged to no-one before white colonization.

The Government's 33-point response largely overlooks the Aborigines' own eight-point charter for reform. Noel Pearson, director of the Cape York Land Council, described the response as 'slimy', attempting as it did to reduce the debate to an issue of land management. Mick Dodson, aboriginal social justice commissioner and former director of the influential Northern Land Council, has called for the debate to be centred clearly on human rights. He said the oppression of, and violence against, Aborigines had been perpetrated first by guns and strychnine, then by word-processors and bureaucrats.

The figurehead of the Mabo case was Eddie Mabo – the traditional leader of the Meriam people of Murray Island in Torres Strait – who died in January 1992 from cancer. Two other plaintiffs also died before the High Court handed down its ruling.

Central to the Government's response is the proposal that each state should establish a tribunal system to decide aboriginal land claims. It would also validate all mining, farming and tourism leases granted before 30 June 1993. Aboriginal groups would be able to claim compensation, but would have no right of veto. Leases signed after 30 June would give Aborigines both native title claims and the right of veto.

A United Nations draft declaration on the rights of indigenous people, which went before its Human Rights Commission in July, would give strong support to the Mabo case if implemented. It proposes the right to self-determination, autonomy and self-government for indigenous peoples. It also states that indigenous peoples have the right to restitution or just and fair compensation where land has been 'confiscated, occupied, used or damaged without their free and informed consent'.

Three Australian states have expressed concern that they might have to make huge compensation payouts, and suggest that economic recovery from recession could be seriously impaired by uncertainty over investment. Prime Minister Paul Keating endorsed Northern Territory legislation against an aboriginal land claim that would have stopped a proposed $250 million McArthur River mining project in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The conservative National Farmers' Federation, as expected, has been strongly critical of the proposal that native title should be revived once a pastoral lease expires.

Meanwhile a health report released at the same time as the Government's response to Mabo caused the Minister of Health, Senator Richardson, to admit that health standards have not improved among Aborigines, who still contend today with health problems that disappeared from the white Australian population in the 1890s. ■

George Fisher

The imprint of aboriginal rights: a hand stencil in Piccaninny Gorge.

A J MOORE / EBENEZER PICTURES

Shunned

Eleven Navajos have died of a strange condition that fills their lungs with fluid and kills them within hours. When the news broke, Navajos throughout the American south-west found themselves shunned by people who were fearful of infection.

In Phoenix, Arizona, restaurant workers were afraid to touch plates used by them. In Gallup, where a young Indian girl had dropped dead at a party, Merle Haggard, a country-and-western singer, refused to leave his bus except to perform. In faraway Los Angeles a private Jewish school cancelled a visit by 27 nine-year-old Navajo pen-pals.

from The Economist, Vol 327, No 7815.

TRANSPORT

Kow-towing in Krakow

'Clunker' buses clean up

WE citizens of Krakow, Poland, sometimes wonder why we see 20-year-old, worn-out Scania buses on the streets. Who decided about this and why? Who gains and who loses? Why is the same Scania clunker we consider a blessing worth *minus* $3,000 in Sweden?

No kidding! That's what you have to pay in Sweden for having a single bus scrapped. So the Swedes took out a patent on a simple invention: find a naive Pole, thrust the junk upon him and play the role of benefactor. The Pole, in his turn, kow-tows to his Western benefactor, too embarrassed to refuse the subsequent offer of a new Scania for real money. A new Scania costs about ten times as much as a Polish or Hungarian-made bus. Inexpensive and efficient as these may be, they were produced during the 'reddish' period of Polish history – an unpardonable sin.

At night you can see buses all over the city with a handful of party-hoppers aboard. But there's little sign of the Polish designed and made H6-02, a small bus with a fuel consumption of a mere 15 litres of diesel oil per 100 kilometres.

This is a result of our inalienable right to Western 'democracy'. Which is why we don't know the phone numbers and addresses of the people we've elected and their names are fading from our memories. This is a pity. We might have asked them how the city administration of Athens is dealing with the smog problem by converting all its buses to natural gas. But that might be asking too much. ■

Piotr Kosibowicz

REFUGEES

DAVID ORR / PANOS

Bhutanese refugees in the Maidhar camp, Nepal – hopeless days ahead.

Stalemate

Nepal and Bhutan at odds over *Lhotshampas*

NEPAL is one of the poorest countries in the world, with 60 per cent of its population living below the poverty line. Yet it is also playing host to large numbers of refugees from Bhutan.

As many as 100,000 Bhutanese of ethnic Nepalese origin have been fleeing into southern Nepal during the past two years with reports of torture and harassment. The genesis of the problem goes back to the mid-nineteenth century, when people from Nepal migrated eastwards to Bhutan. They came to be called 'Lhotshampas' by the Drukpas of Bhutan, and they settled in the largely uninhabited southern half of the country. More migrations followed. But there was little assimilation, and hostility developed between the Lhotshampas and Drukpas.

The Citizenship Act in 1985 and subsequent measures making the wearing of Bhutanese dress compulsory were designed to make life uncomfortable for the Lhotshampas. In 1990 the royal government began evicting 'illegal settlers' and 'political activists'.

Nepal is now pressing Bhutan to take back the refugees. Talks between the two Governments have reached stalemate. Bhutan claims that the refugees in the camps in Jhapa are not 'bona fide'. Nepal has asked India to intervene, but India has not responded.

Local residents of Jhapa complain that the refugee camps cause damage to the forest land and increase the price of essential commodities. Villagers resent the free food, piped water and shelter provided by the aid agencies that have sustained the refugees for the past two years. The seemingly hopeless days ahead threaten increasing unrest. ■

Patralekha Chatterjee

Transmission

ISER, a Rio-based aid agency, decided to launch an AIDS prevention program among Afro-Brazilians, prostitutes and transvestites in the city. The ISER team knew that more than 80 per cent of Afro-Brazilians were connected to the Candomble and Umbanda religions. So they turned to the priests and priestesses who not only wield authority but are also aware of the ritual importance of blood, sperm and saliva. At the same time, contact was also made with prostitutes and transvestites who revealed a strong interest in protecting themselves and promoting the use of condoms. These discussions resulted in two programs. One provides information to the Candomble and Umbanda priestesses and priests who pass it on when exercising their influence on people. A second has created a trade union of prostitutes and provides material on AIDS, devised and distributed by the prostitutes and transvestites themselves. These programs replace a failed government project that saw clinics opened and documentation distributed but where there was no consultation with the target groups. The clinics remained empty and the documentation prepared by health ministry officials unread.

from UNESCO, Sources, No 47.

SEAN SPRAGUE / PANOS

Counselling needs consultation in São Paulo.

Safe secrets

Officials in Tachikawa, west of Tokyo, report they are recycling tons of top-secret documents with a state-of-the-art shredder. It shreds paper without destroying the fibre. But there's no cause for concern – the shreds aren't large enough to reveal classified information. City officials say they hope to produce 30,000 rolls of toilet paper annually from state secrets because 'toilet paper is very close to everyone. It's a good material to get people to think about recycling.'

from Down to Earth, Vol 2, No 3.

Hot water

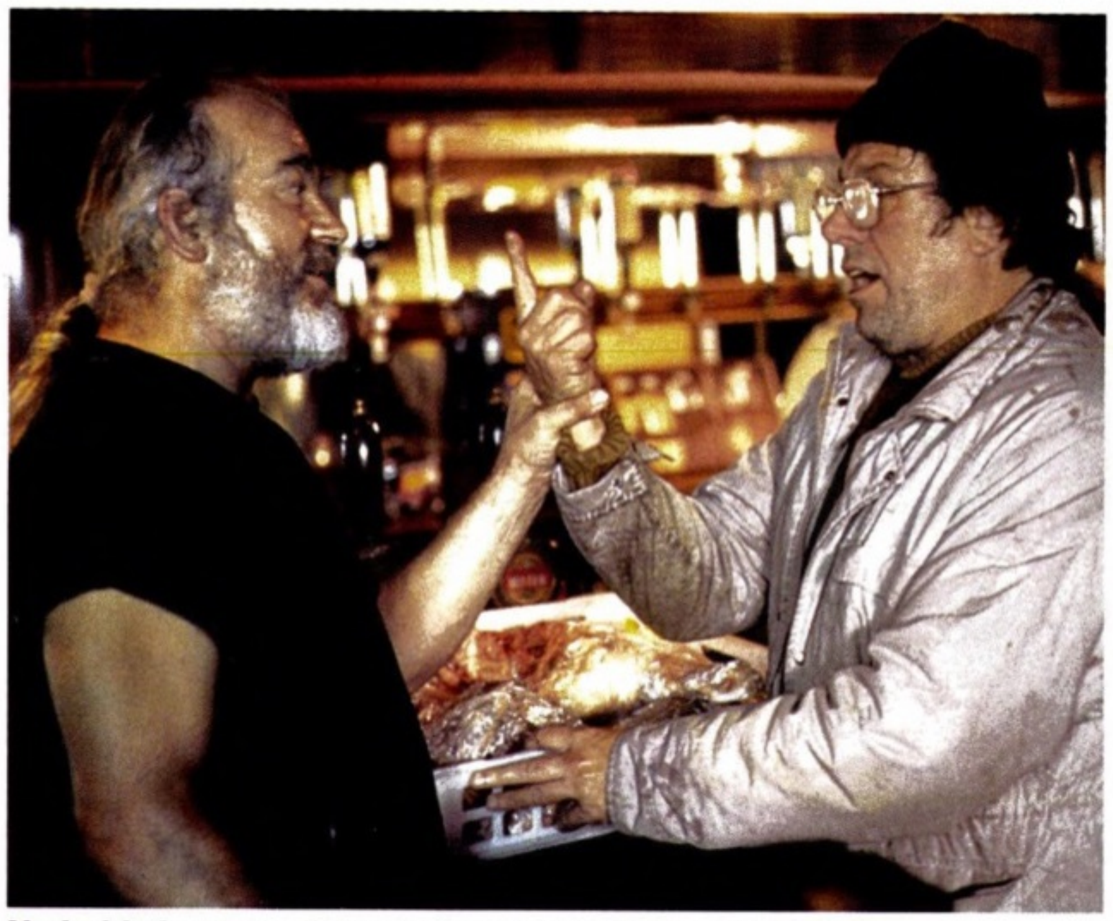
The Bolivian government has embarked upon a campaign to popularize a herbal tea called *mate de coca*. If this pleasant infusion captured only five per cent of the global market for hot drinks, Bolivia would have a bigger foreign exchange earner than its present main export: natural gas. There is a major snag, though. The tea is banned under the Vienna Convention on Narcotic Drugs – even though it is harmless – because it is brewed from the leaves of the coca bush.

from The Independent, London, 24 January 1993

END Quote

'We don't see things as they are, we see them as *we* are.'

Anaïs Nin, French writer (1903-1977)



No holds barred: telling it like it is in *Raining Stones*.

film

Raining Stones

directed by **Ken Loach**

Naked

directed by **Mike Leigh**

Ken Loach can always be relied upon to passionately tell it like it is. Since his groundbreaking TV play *Cathy Come Home* was broadcast in the 1960s he has been committed to investigating the lives of those in Britain who have been disenfranchised through class and economic disparity. His latest film, **Raining Stones** – written by Jim Allen, who has a similar track record in TV films like *Days of Hope* and *The Spongers* – is no less harsh an indictment of social inequality.

Set in a rundown housing estate in Oldham, it follows an out-of-work couple's attempts to find money to buy their daughter a confirmation outfit. The documentary style and the exceptional cast of actors mostly new to film give the story a wholly naturalistic edge. It is a sadly simple tale that speaks volumes about contemporary British society. It is also a tale that could so easily have dripped with patronizing sentiment. But, as with Loach's last film, *Riff-Raff*, **Raining Stones** is not a gloomy survey of working-class life but rather burns with a fierce and poignant humour. From the opening scenes in which the father and his best friend set out to steal a sheep, have it slaughtered and then sell bits of the meat in a pub, there is a caustic appreciation of the ripe farce of the situation. This comes from the characters themselves, who respond to their plight with humour and wit as much as anger.

And with the family priest proving that liberation theology has as much a place in Britain as, say, El Salvador, the film is one of the best arguments yet for Britain to be viewed as a Third World country.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆☆

Loach's indictment of modern Britain is seasoned with compassion and warmth. In comparison, Mike Leigh's **Naked** seems devoid of any humanity. Leigh also attempts to portray the contemporary social malaise and diagnose the ills of post-Thatcherite Britain. His film is also fired with anger. But it could not be more brutishly apocalyptic. The film opens traumatically as a young couple's grapple in the dark turns into rape. Absconding from the incident is the film's 'hero', Johnny, a deeply disturbed young man who takes the road south to London to seek refuge with his ex-girlfriend Louise. The film follows his messianic odyssey as he takes to the soulless streets, preaching despair and damnation – a man angry with the injustices of the world. David Thewlis's astounding performance as Johnny rips out at the audience, helping to make **Naked** an exhausting physical experience.

Leigh offers no measure of hope for any repair in our lives. The film is cut with divisions between classes, between regions and most emphatically between the sexes. In **Naked,** men can only ever feel cold disdain for women. The opening rape scene sets the tone: men fuck women over, time and time again. It is not that Leigh approves of this – it is a situation about which he is in obvious despair. But his vision is fundamentally negative.

Dark and depressing, **Naked** whips up a storm of stones.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆

music

The '69 Los Angeles Sessions

by **Fela Ransome Kuti & Nigeria 70** ***(Stern's Africa)***

Although Fela Kuti was destined to spend only a matter of months in the US in 1969-70, the visit was to assume a profound significance. Kuti, a phenomenally gifted Nigerian trumpeter who had studied music at London's Trinity College, had – in 1968 – begun

Living in peace: Fela Kuti

to reformulate his jazzy, R&B sounds into an indigenous format he called Afrobeat.

This was, he acknowledged, a reaction to the way much African music at the time was taking its cue from America's James Brown. Paradoxically it was the American experience – and time spent with friends like Black Panther activist Sandra Isidore – that was to spur Kuti's reorientation towards Africa and an overt embrace of pacifist politics. Introduced to the writings of Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver and black radicals who looked back to the ancient civilizations of Africa, Kuti promptly changed the name of his band from Koola Lobitos to Nigeria 70. It was, a few months later, to be changed again to Afrika 70, by which time Kuti's songs – fierce indictments of corruption and oppression – were already beginning to attract the unwelcome attention of the Nigerian police.

Politics and music – not least the freedom to make music – were to become inseparable elements of Kuti's career. But here he was only just beginning. The utter freshness of the ten **Sessions** tracks belie the urgent conditions under which they were recorded. Having been dumped by their tour promoter, Kuti and his band were days away from an unceremonious deportation. A lawyer managed to get the Nigerians a 60-day visa extension to enable them to record the album. Without a record deal or cash, the session was pulled together with remarkable good will. Ghanaian trumpeter Duke Lumumba joined Kuti on horns while friends led by Isidore called in cash and favours.

In later years Kuti's music was to be characterized by lengthy, full-blown pieces that would bob and weave their sinuous course over periods of 20 minutes or more. Not so here. Never outstaying their welcome, these jazzy, intricate highlife sounds sweep down like a hot wind.

There's a wonderful vitality in the tapes that is undimmed by 20 years spent in an archives cupboard. Kuti is economical when it comes to vocals – in either English or Yoruba – and this explains the impact of a song like *Viva Nigeria.* 'Let us bind our wounds and live in peace,' he sings above a mesh of horns and guitars. 'Tribal war will never be the answer.'

It might not have the acerbic ring of later songs like *International Thief* or *Vagabonds* in *Power* but the authoritative tones are audible for anyone to recognize.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

books

Barbaric Others

by **Zia Sardar, Ashis Nandy and Merryl Wyn Davies** ***(Pluto Press ISBN 0-7453-0743-4)***

The term barbarian comes from the Greek ***barbaroi,*** meaning 'babbler' or one who could not speak Greek. For the Greeks this automatically meant someone had no faculty of reason and was unable to control their passions. With refreshing simplicity this fast-paced book – subtitled *A Manifesto on Western Racism,* traces how that xenophobic equation of Other with Barbarian has endured in Western

civilization's relationship with the rest of the world.

We have the flesh-hating, nature-hating, heretic-persecuting Christian crusaders, conquistadors and missionaries confronting people who have a non-adversarial relationship with nature, who are not ashamed of their bodies, and who are different. The Christian response is well documented: convert or kill.

We have Columbus, unable to handle the idea that the inhabitants of the New World had no concept of property ownership, thereby concluding that they must be barbaric, barely human.

The Columbus mindset, the myopic *oculis mundi* of the West, lives on through imperialism and post-colonialism to the present day.

So is there hope of a better relationship ever developing between the narrow-minded, dominating West and the rest of the world? Yes, say the authors. 'The real peoples of the not-West... can offer the mental tools with which to cut through the intellectual and cultural rubbish of the past accumulated within the present' and to work towards 'a polylogue of cultures'. But the West also needs to understand itself, to see that underlying its arrogance is an unnecessary fear that accommodating difference will necessarily destabilize the Western self.

Barbaric Others concludes on a high note: 'A multicivilizational future is not a recipe for conflict... or chaos but the means to a new multiverse of possibilities, to a more sustainable and just future in social, economic and environmental terms.'

This is a fresh, inspiring and illuminating perspective and – save for the occasional lapse into academic jargon – is clear and accessible. It deserves pride of place in schools and among history books everywhere.

Politics ☆☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆

STAR RATING

Excellent ☆☆☆☆☆
Very good ☆☆☆☆
Good ☆☆☆
Fair ☆☆
Poor ☆

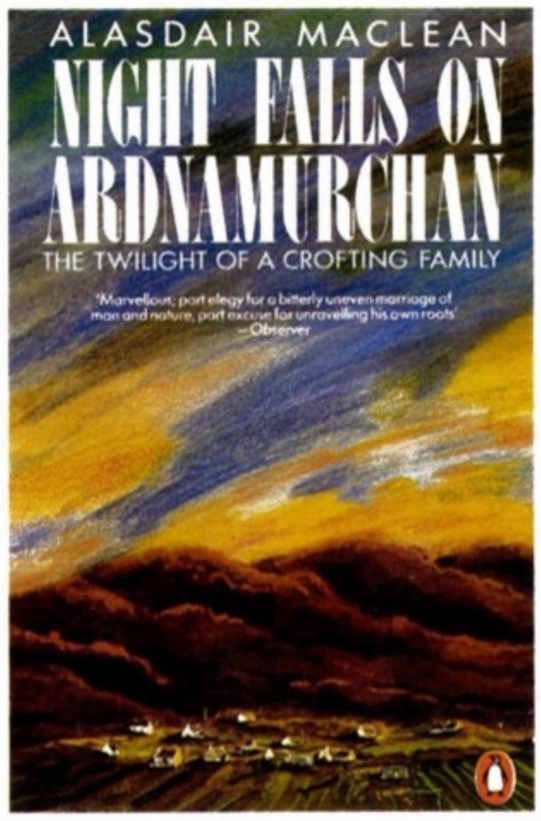
Reviews editor: **Chris Brazier**

THE *classic*

Night Falls on Ardnamurchan

... being the book that embraced a vanishing way of life

SEVERAL years ago I visited the village of Sanna, at the tip of the Ardnamurchan Peninsula on the west coast of Scotland. My trip to this remote and isolated area was as a direct result of reading Alasdair Maclean's remarkable book on the last days of a crofting family. Anyone who has visited the Highlands will have been struck by the way the terrain and the elements combine to produce a land of breathtaking beauty and wildness in which eking out any sort of living takes a miracle of human cussedness and endurance. What is a joy to the casual tourist is misery to the resident crofter.



The poet Alasdair Maclean wrote **Night Falls on Ardnamurchan** in an attempt to unravel his feelings about the land and about his family, as well as provide a record of a disappearing way of life. At the heart of the book are extracts from Alasdair's father's journals of the crofting year – a minimalist record of an unrelenting struggle to survive in the face of harsh nature and neglect by 'the authorities'. Alasdair fleshes out his father's terse comments with a much more discursive parallel commentary, bringing vividly to life such subjects as the economics of gathering whelks (dubious); the centrality of animals in the crofting scheme of things; and the unremitting strain that living in a 'marginal' community entails.

Alasdair Maclean had a love-hate relationship with the crofting life. As a poet he could recognize the way in which the work contributed to a sense of self and individuality but he detested the grinding poverty and insularity of outlook. Raging against the shortcomings, he is honest enough to admit the pull of loyalty and obligation that such an upbringing provides.

Reading the book (and visiting Sanna) I felt a strong bond with this struggle and was reminded of the line in Hamish Henderson's song ***Come All Ye*** which links the *pitheid* (coalmine) and the *clachan* (rural village) as symbols of working-class hardship and solidarity. When I was growing up in a mining village in England's North-East in the 1960s, pits were closed at a barbaric rate, leaving workless communities classified for quiet disappearance, a process being repeated and compounded with the present pit closures.

Marginal in strategic if not physical terms, the worth of these communities was sacrificed to economic gods over which they had no influence. As with crofting, the urgent thought is: what are societies for? When the closure of a monoculture or industry spells the death of a community, are balance sheets enough? There is, I think, a failure of imagination, of empathy, here on the part of governments. While people do not necessarily value the jobs for themselves – who would choose to be a miner, to be a crofter, with all the backbreaking and health-damaging work involved? – people value their communities and their culture. They recognize that while economic logic may dictate extinction for their way of life, economic logic is wrong; that there are more important things than the bottom line.

Maclean's use of language is resonant and rhapsodic – the account of the yearly haymaking is both a thing of beauty and a factual treasure trove. He also displays a coruscating wit as, for instance, in his description of the Highland custom of visiting, in which timing is crucial both in visiting before you are visited yourself and in nipping out the back way to avoid the unwelcome guest. If the author is not always tolerant of failings or stupidities – and he can be as harsh with his *ain folk* as with the follies of bureaucrats – his understanding of the importance of the small coinage of human kindness is unsurpassed.

The book ends with Alasdair returning to Ardnamurchan after his father's death and attempting to continue the crofting tradition. He is candid about his own failures and shortcomings but manages to complete a connection that is crucial to any understanding of our place in the world. 'If I have done nothing else in my life that will count when the time for counting comes,' he says, 'I have at least sat on a hillside in Ardnamurchan and looked down on a croft that I had harvested unaided and against considerable odds. I have watched the shadows creep out from the dotted ricks and the stubble take the evening light in the impress of the vanished swathes. And if I felt sad at being the last in a long line I also felt for the first time, truly and confidently, that to be last in a line is still to be part of that line.'

This is a book like no other that I have ever read. It moved me to tears of outrage, sorrow and laughter. Books that claim to 'change your life' are ten-a-penny. Books that actually do are extremely rare. This is one of them. ■

Peter Whittaker

Night Falls on Ardnamurchan – The Twilight of a Crofting Family by Alasdair Maclean *(Penguin)*.

QUESTIONS

...that have always intrigued you about the world will appear in this, your section, and be answered by other readers. Please address your answers and questions to 'Curiosities'.

Why are people from the UK described as POMs in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand?

● I know of at least three theories:

The first: that it originated in convict times and stands for 'Prisoner of Mother England' or 'Prisoner of Her (His) Majesty'.

The second: that it is short for pomegranate, because the fair, rosy-cheeked complexion of newly arrived Brits was

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY

Rosy-cheeked Brits arrive in Sydney.

thought to resemble this fruit.

Third: that it arose from the rhyming slang used by children in colonial times. Apparently they used to greet ships of newly arrived British immigrants with chants of 'immigrant, jimmygrant, pommygrant'. The third of these theories is mentioned in GA Wilkes' A Dictionary of Australian Colloquialisms (Fontana/Collins, 1978) and therefore appears to be the most probable.

Jane Sanders
Woollahra, Australia

● I have been told it is because the English were potato eaters – 'poms' or 'pommies' deriving from the French *pomme de terre*.

Katie Collins
Somerset, UK

● The latest (tongue in cheek) usage is 'pom de terre' for a dead English person.

Len Clarke
Uxbridge, UK

Is the story of Elzeard Bouffin – the man who planted trees in the Alps – true?

● Yes – contrary to the answer given in **NI 247** it is based on Edward Bouffier, born in southern France in about 1858. After the death of his son, followed by that of his wife, Bouffier took to the arid uplands some 60 miles north of Marseilles, accompanied by his dog and about 30 sheep. In 1913 the writer Jean Giono found Bouffier tending his sheep and planting 100 acorns a day. In 1920 Giono found Bouffier again. By then the oaks were taller than men and the forest stretched – at its widest – for six miles. Giono visited Bouffier every year from 1920. Bouffier died at Banon in 1947, aged 89 years, having probably planted saplings or seed for a forest of over a million trees.The full story can be found in *Le Sauvage,* number 48, December 1974.

Rev Roger Smith
Saxmundham, UK

Why aren't mosquitoes in the list of transmitters of HIV?

● The answer given in *Curiosities* **NI 243** contains two factual errors. First, there is no malaria 'virus'. Second, there are many mosquito-borne diseases other than malaria, including yellow fever and encephalitis. The best short answer to the question is 'mosquitoes aren't listed as carriers because they have not been clearly shown to be transmitters'.

Joe Minor
Hamilton, Canada

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

I've read that men have periodical physical cycles, though without the visible symptoms of female cycles. Can anyone tell me more, recommend any books or articles on the subject, or suggest how I might be able to calculate my cycle?

Dinyar Godrej
Oxford, UK

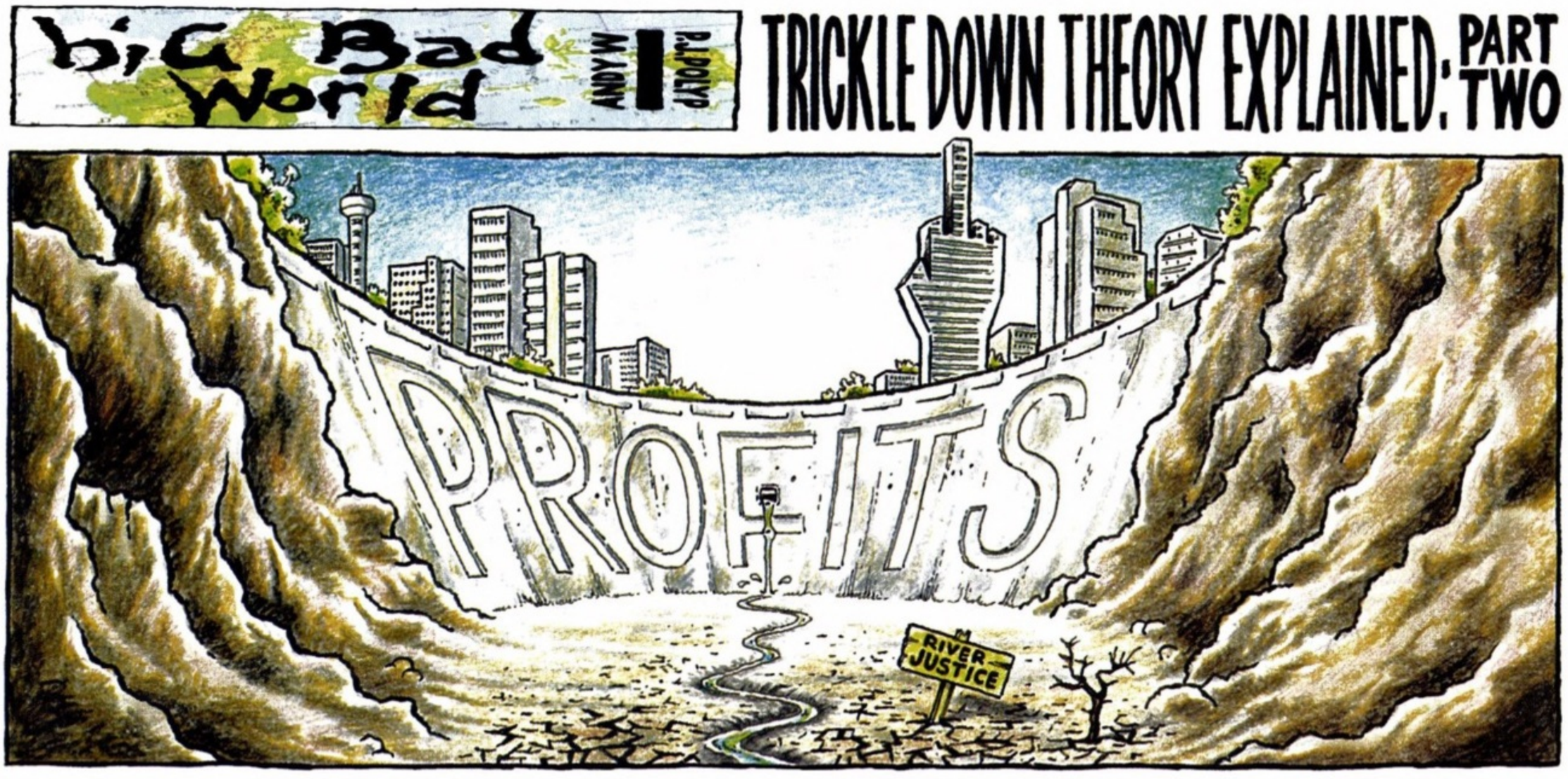
Which country or region of the world has been the most peaceful – free from both internal strife and involvement in external strife – during the past two centuries?

Diana Gibson
Ross-on-Wye, UK

The phrase 'the enemy within' was used by Margaret Thatcher to describe the miners during the British miners' strike of the mid-1980s. Was this phrase originated by Margaret Thatcher? If not, who was the first to use it?

Geoff Toman and Maria Loewendahl
Oxford, UK

If you have any questions or answers please send them to Curiosities, **New Internationalist, 55 Rectory Road, Oxford OX4 1BW, UK,** or to your local NI office (see inside front cover for addresses).



Forgotten empire

The sun may eventually set upon the relics of the French empire. But, as ***Alastair Bonnett*** *reports, there are some unexpected twists to the end of the tale.*

SOME empires never die, they just get forgotten. So it is with the numerous small – and some not so small – French *territoires* and *départements* dotted across the world where the tricolour still proudly ripples. From French Guyana to Réunion, from New Caledonia to Tahiti, the colonial era has yet to draw to a close. And, if France has anything to do with it, it never will.

There is an explanation that's popular with the French government. It runs something like this: Britain bled its colonies dry but France was a nurturing mother. No surprise then that whilst Britain's enfeebled victims desperately strove for freedom, France's plump children desired only to remain forever nestled at her milky bosom.

It is a convenient myth for late twentieth-century imperialists but it's hardly a convincing one. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the South Pacific. In the mid-1950s France had the most progressive policy of any of the powers operating in the region. Back then New Caledonia and French Polynesia were largely self-governing. But with the loss of Algeria Paris was forced to scour the planet for somewhere new to test its atomic bombs. The lucky winner was French Polynesia. The devastation the tests have caused to the cultural and ecological fabric – not to mention the health – of the region eventually provoked an international outcry, led by New Zealand, and prized a temporary moratorium on testing from the Mitterand Government.

However, France's Pacific colonies have other uses. Ron Crocombe, Professor of Pacific Studies at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, points out that New Caledonia possesses one of the world's largest nickel deposits. By imposing a 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone around its territories France has 'control of more water than any other nation on earth'. As for the claim that France's colonial rule is justified by the lack of support for local independence movements, says Crocombe, 'If the other colonial powers had followed this approach there would not be a single independent country in the Pacific today'.

The indigenous peoples of France's Pacific possessions seem unwilling, however, to be colonial subjects forever. The Kanak independence movement in New Caledonia (FLNKS) is at present trying to broaden its support-base beyond the Kanaks, who now make up only 42 per cent of the island's population. Their persistence forced the French government into promising a referendum on sovereignty for 1998. If New Caledonia votes for independence it is likely to be followed by French Polynesia, where politicians in the local capital, Papeete, are already disillusioned with incessant interference from Paris.

But if these Pacific islands are taking the first steps towards freedom, at least one of France's other possessions still seems unprepared to contemplate separation. Réunion, an island in the Indian Ocean with a population of 600,000, is an increasingly confused and confusing place.

The extraordinary recent rise to power of the Free Dom Party (the 'Dom' bit is a play upon the French *Départements d'outre-mer*) illustrates the point. It is made up of supporters of an illegal TV station, Tl Free Dom, one of the only media outlets on the island where Créole can be spoken and trenchant criticisms made of the Government. When the authorities shut down the station in 1991 widespread rioting broke out in the island's capital, Saint-Denis, leaving 10 people dead. Elections in March 1993 then swept Free Dom's leader, French ex-pat and ex-Maoist Camille Sudre, into office as president of the Regional Council.

Sold for a dream: will French style wedding celebrations on the island of Réunion soon be a distant memory?

SEBASTIAO SALGADO

A mandate for change? Not at all. Far from demanding independence, one of Free Dom's main platforms was a call for even closer ties to France. With unemployment running at 40 per cent, islanders want the same unemployment benefit and minimum wage levels as in France. Free Dom has pledged itself to make these aspirations a reality.

In the French West Indies economic ruin and independence used to be widely construed as synonymous. But with France's entry into the European single market things have changed. In Martinique the hit song of the 1990 carnival described in fearsome terms the *Grand Méchant Loup*, the evil European wolf, waiting to gobble up the economies of France's Caribbean colonies once the umbilical cord of the colonial economy is severed.

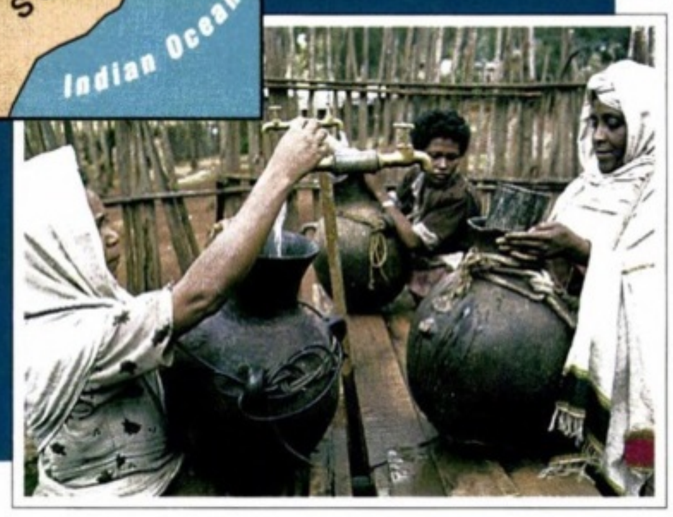
And yet when the sun does finally sink on France's colonial adventure it will probably be remembered less for its economic failure or machiavellian manoeuvrings than for its devastating cultural impact. Tourists are enraptured by 'how French' these shards of empire seem. But Jacqui Drollet, secretary-general of the Ia Mana party in French Polynesia, offers words that will be found in no tourist brochure. 'Our land has changed hands, we have sold it for a dream. Our power of decision has been taken from us, and all we have got in exchange are a few social welfare benefits.' ■

Alastair Bonnett is an author whose work includes *Radicalism, Anti-racism and Representation* (Routledge, 1993).

Ethiopia

FROM the obelisks of ancient kings to the covenant of the Lost Ark, Ethiopia exudes a sense of the ancient history of a forgotten Africa – before the ravages of colonialism. When the Caribbean-based Rastafarian movement wanted to recover African roots, it was to Ethiopia that they looked first. Ethiopia is the oldest country in Africa and its history is closely identified with the African expression of Coptic Christianity which dates back to biblical times. The legendary Queen of Sheba was one of the early rulers of a succession of imperial dynasties.

At first the religious and political centre of Ethiopia was in the rugged hill province of Tigray with the imperial throne in Axum. Gradually the centre of power shifted southwards, eventually to Addis-Ababa (New Flower) and the Ethiopian state came to be dominated by the Amharic people of central Shoa province.



NEIL COOPER / PANOS PICTURES

The feudal system offered pomp and prosperity to the nobility but kept the peasant majority in poverty. Haile Selassie shocked the world by trying to hide a large scale famine. A popular movement against the monarchy and its corrupt oligarchy of landowners overthrew him in 1974. In 1977 a military junta led by Colonel Mengistu embarked on a brand of barracks-style communism that condemned Ethiopia to 15 years of state repression, high military spending and bloody civil war.

During the years of 'Red Terror', bodies left as warnings on the streets of Addis were a fairly common sight. Across the country ethnically-based liberation movements sprang up to oppose autocracy.

Mengistu's regime was finally overthrown in May 1991 and replaced by a multi-ethnic coalition led by the leftist Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement.

Today Addis houses the glistening headquarters of the Organization of African Unity and the UN Economic Commission of Africa. The city is marked by the stalled modernity of unfinished high-rises and has doubled in size as refugees arrived from the region's countless battlefields. Most are homeless and literally live and die on the streets.

Rain-fed agriculture remains the staple for most peasant farmers. With fertile land turned over to cash crops like coffee, the country has been particularly vulnerable to drought which contributed to the devastating famine of the mid-1980s.

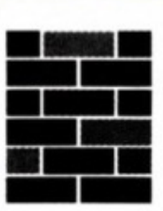
The former province of Eritrea is now independent, leaving the new Ethiopian Government of Meles Zenawi to balance the aspirations of Ethiopia's different ethnic groups and meet basic social needs. The results of regional elections in 1992 have been challenged by the Oromo Liberation Front who are increasingly alienated by the dominance of Tigrayan interests, but the political atmosphere in Addis is freer than in living memory. Much will turn on the results of full national elections promised for May 1994. ■

Richard Swift

AT A glance

Excellent	★★★★★
Good	★★★★
Fair	★★★
Poor	★★
Appalling	★

POLITICS
Interim President heads transitional government before next year's elections.



1983

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★★★
Very poor country but less wealth polarization than its neighbours.

ADULT LITERACY ★★
Estimates range from 23 to 62% but figures are old and unreliable and don't cover current borders.

SELF-RELIANCE ★★
Heavy debt load and dependence on aid from Mengistu period.

1983 ★★

FREEDOM ★★★★
Basic rights and ethnic self-determination guaranteed by Zenawi govt.

1983 ★★

POSITION OF WOMEN ★★★
Women played an important role in the struggle against military dictatorship but gains must be consolidated.

1983 ★★

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★
At 46, one of the lowest in the world. High infant mortality.

1983 ★

Leader Ata Meles Zenawi, leader of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and President of the transitional government of Ethiopia.
Economy GNP per capita US$ 120 (US $21,790)
Monetary unit: Birr
Main Exports: Coffee (60%); hides and skins, some vegetable products.
Main Imports: Most industrial products; cars, machinery, medicine and most manufactured goods.
People 46.7 million.
Health Infant mortality: 125 per 1,000 live births (US 9 per 1,000). It's estimated that more than a million Ethiopians have died of starvation in the last 20 years.
Culture Two thirds are of Amhara or Oromo descent. There are many other ethnic groups including the Tigre, Gurage, Niloti, Somali and Afari.
Religion: Most Ethiopians are Coptic Christians but with a large Muslim minority. Traditional African religions are also practised.
Language: Amharic (official); Oromo; English widely taught in schools; Arabic and over a hundred local languages and dialects.

Sources: *State of the World's Children,* UNICEF 1993*: 1993/4 Third World Guide,* ITeM, Uruguay*: World Development Report*, The World Bank, 1992.

Last profiled in July 1983

The bite spreads parasitic worms. They breed under your skin and produce hordes of microscopic worms called microfilariae which infest your body for years. You itch, you get skin problems, you become debilitated.

Then the microfilariae invade your eyes. And you slowly become blind.

It's called River Blindness - "the disease at the end of the track". You'll find it in a host of fast-flowing rivers in West and Central Africa. And there you will find most of the victims - the million or so who have already lost their sight and the seventeen million who have the symptoms and are at risk of blindness; their sight could be saved - quickly and easily.

The price of River Blindness

Consider what happens if you lose your sight in a poor African country. No disability benefit, no regular medical facilities, little prospect of remedial work.

There is just your family living at the harshest subsistence level. You become a burden on them. You will need to be led from place to place. You can do little to contribute to their welfare.

For this is the particular agony of River Blindness. It takes years to gestate. When blindness strikes, you are likely to be in your thirties or forties. You are likely to be the family breadwinner. Without you, the family will lose their hard-won self-sufficiency and become dependent on the charity of neighbours.

And it is all avoidable.

THE BLACK SIMULIUM FLY

Ivermectin: It works, it's cheap, it's available

Merck, Sharp and Dohme have developed a drug to halt River Blindness. It is a simple-to-take white tablet called ivermectin and it has been thoroughly tested in Africa. It not only prevents blindness but it tackles the painful symptoms as well. There are no serious side effects.

The manufacturers have generously agreed to supply ivermectin free. Sight Savers is committed to distributing it in Nigeria, Ghana, Mali, Uganda and Sierra Leone. We intend to expand the programme to include Guinea and Senegal.

If this sounds easy, it isn't. Sight Savers works worldwide and River Blindness is just one part of our work. So, a distribution programme on this scale will strain our resources to the utmost - we will need all the help we can get.

Then again, you have to allow for the reality of medical work in poor countries. In some of those countries there are village health workers or committees who we can train to distribute ivermectin. In others we are relying on nurses who go from village to village. We shall be very reliant on local people, village chiefs in particular, to guide much of this programme.

And there are transport problems. The dry flatlands of Mali make a 50cc motorcycle a reasonable means of travel; in the hilly, forest regions of Sierra Leone, we'll need a tougher 125cc machine. A lot of ivermectin will be distributed by simple bicycle.

And the programme will go on for years. In each community at risk, ivermectin will have to be distributed annually for at least ten years to break the transmission cycle of the disease. Our aim worldwide is to ensure that , within twenty five years, **nobody** will lose their sight through River Blindness.

IT BITES YOU

PLEASE USE MY DONATION QUICKLY

I am enclosing a donation of

☐ £100 ☐ £25 ☐ £10 Other _____

with a cheque/PO made payable to Sight Savers.

OR I prefer to give via my Access/Visa Card No.

Card Expiry Date _____ NWO2

Cardholders Signature _____

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms) _____ Initials _____

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Please send your donation to: Sight Savers, FREEPOST, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3ZA

Sight Savers is grateful to the producers of "Blue Peter" for their contribution to this River Blindness Appeal.

How much can you help us?

The whole world is full of claims on your generosity and the problems of the Third World will never go away in our lifetimes. But our River Blindness campaign is a hard-headed, practical and immediate chance to do something to prevent one evil once and for all.

It may help to think of your donation in very literal terms.

For it takes just £25 to protect twenty five people against River Blindness for a whole year.

£70 buys one of those bicycles for a medical assistant.

And £400 sponsors a training course for health workers.

But, whatever you can afford to send us, you will know that it is going to help rid the world of the scourge of River Blindness. There are not many things you can do that can achieve so much, so profoundly, so quickly.

Thank you for whatever you can do.

SIGHT SAVERS

Sight Savers, FREEPOST,
Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3ZA
Reg. Charity No. 207544

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP '93

A World fair for a fair world.

CLEAR a space in you diary for the first weekend in December, remember that Christmas is just around the corner and invest in a day trip to Olympia and A World Fair for a Fair World.

Savour the bustling Christmas Market, choc-a-bloc with wonderful gifts. Experience the carnival atmosphere of the live music and celebrate the culture of the Third World. Investigate the work of the voluntary agencies and just what they are dong with your support. You could also see a film or join one the many discussions on international development issues.

There will be over 200 exhibitors and fair traders including: Action Aid, Amnesty, Friends of the Earth, OXFAM, Greenpeace, VSO, War on Want and WWF.

Friday 3 December 11 am – 7 pm
Saturday 4 December 11 am – 7 pm
Sunday 5 December 11 am – 5 pm

Admission **£4.00.** Concessionary rate **£2.00**

The full programme will be printed in TIME OUT magazine on 30 November.

Friday is Schools Day. You are welcome to bring a schools party; there is a programme designed for pupils and Sixth Form Conference. Write to us for details.

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For more information please send a SAE to GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP '93, PO Box 1001, London SE24 9NL.

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP '93 is organised by the Trust for Education and Development ,a registered charity. It is a non-profit event aimed at widening the understanding of global issues among the people of the UK.

Patrons: Chinua Achebe, Baroness Flather, Simon Hughes, Lord Judd, John Tusa.

NI

Make a date with the New Internationalist at

A World Fair for a Fair World

HAVE A GREAT DAY OUT!

Live at Olympia!

Friday 3 December
Saturday 4 December
Sunday 5 December

New Internationalist sponsorship

We think this annual event is one of the most important in our calendar. With nearly all the environmental, human rights, fair trading organisations represented, this Fair is a major forum for people concerned with Third World Justice. And it's enjoyable too. We look forward to seeing you there.

As one of the sponsors of this event we will be having a large stall and exhibition area. Members of the NI team will be selling a range of our publications – like the **1994 Third World Calendar,** the **1994 Almanac** and the new **World in your Kitchen** cook book, other publications and a range of our most popular T-shirts.

It is always fun for us meet and talk with **New Internationalist** readers and we would be delighted to hear your views on the magazine and what we can do to improve it.

We also have end-of-range T-shirts and other items that we are clearing at below cost. The World Fair for a Fairer World is an ideal opportunity to browse through the bargains and do your Christmas shopping.

Yet the New Internationalist is only a small part of big event – there will be over 200 exhibitors and stalls. Besides the bustling market there is live music and dance,with several acts every day, conferences, talks, stone art and children's events.

To keep you going there will be a variety of mouth-watering snacks and meals. The bar will be open all day.

How to get there: take the London Underground District Line to Kensington (Olympia) and Olympia is a short walk – follow the signposts.

- *Buy some lovely NI publications and garments for Christmas.*
- *Meet some of the New Internationalist team.*
- *Give us your feedback on the magazine.*
- *Snap up end-of-range bargains.*

Department of Peace Studies

The Department of Peace Studies is the only university department in the UK which deals exclusively with peace and related issues and is now the largest centre of its kind in the world. In addition to its Master's programmes, the Department has a large research programme.
Candidates from a wide variety of backgrounds may find these courses useful to their needs. Applications from those wishing to pursue a research topic for an MPhil or PhD will also be considered.

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Further information and application forms are available from: **Paula Russell, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, Bradford BD7 1DP.**
Tel: 0274 384171. Fax: 0274 385240.

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University of Southampton

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Please quote Ref: NI:Nov 93

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Restrictions on budgets for course promotion mean that a small amount of money may still have to do a very large job of student recruitment. The NI is a tried and tested medium, with over 70,000 subscribers worldwide. By appearing in this magazine you can obtain a whole month's exposure for your course at a cost which is less than that of just a single day in a newspaper.

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SERVAS suggests that you may foster international peace by becoming a traveller and/or host in its worldwide network of international hospitality and friendship. Please send a stamp. *North America and Canada: US Service Committee NI, 11 John Street, Room 706, New York, NY 10038. Australia: Servas Australia NI, 16 Cavill Court, Vermont South, Vic. 3133. Rest of the world: Servas International NI, PO Box 1035 Edinburgh EH3 9JQ, UK.*

UP-TO -DATE DETAILS on jobs, housing and education in the USA are available through an extensive computer information database. Full details by sending 9" x 4" SAE + £1 Postal Order to *PO Box 1103, Acton, London W3.*

International humanity

Much-travelled folk soon discover that, wherever they are in the world, basic human nature and basic human needs are the same. All peoples need a sufficiency of food and clothing, proper housing and hygienic conditions in which to live. Apart from that for real happiness they need freedom of thought, of association and of movement. They need to be able to read and say what they like and above all they need friendly relationships, affection, love, trust and an absence of the fear that others will harm them. Theosophy or the Ancient Wisdom teaches that spiritually all men are of one family owing reasonable allegiance to each other. This seems like right thinking.

To know more about Theosophy write to -

The Blavatsky Trust, (N2)
Avalon. Little Weston. Yeovil.
Somerset BA22 7HP.

SAY NO TO ALL WAR. Join the Anglican Communion's movement for peace. Write: *Anglican Pacifist Fellowship, Walters Farmhouse, Brenchley, Tonbridge, Kent TN12 7NU, UK. Tel: (0666) 825249. New Zealand: A.P.F., 4 Roland Hill, Glen Eden, Auckland 7. USA: Episcopal Peace Fellowship, 620 G Street SE, Washington DC 20003.*

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Together all people of goodwill are building the New Humanity. Free quarterly newsletter on New World Order, Africa, UN, Global Spirituality, Development. Papers on meditation, Ageless Wisdom etc. *World Goodwill, 3 Whitehall Court, London SW1A 2EF, UK.*

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HELP US
BRING DEMOCRACY AND PEACE TO EL SALVADOR

On 20 March 1994, the people of El Salvador will elect the President, General Assembly deputies and 260 mayors. The Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) is now a legal political party and is planning its electoral strategy. The main aim is to defeat ARENA, the party in power, created by the death squads. Help us defeat ARENA's campaign. Your donation can help Salvadorean people achieve the democracy, peace and social justice they deserve.

EL SALVADOR SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN
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ATTENTION! Black Women's Network have moved to: *Box 5, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8 2NS.*

FREEDOM for ourselves and others depends on our ability to reorganise society around people and their needs, not big capital and greed. Let's talk about what we can do: *THE HUMANIST MOVEMENT, (061) 224 0749.*

INTERNATIONAL DAY AGAINST VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.
WOMANKIND Worldwide is a registered charity working hard to encourage discussion about the hidden crime of violence against women. On 25 November 1993 it is hosting an International Forum with speakers from around the world – prominent women brought together to highlight the issues and the needs for change. For more information contact: *WOMANKIND Worldwide, Tel: 071 247 9431*

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the NI 1994 THIRD WORLD ALMANAC

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Other features include:
● weekly quotation to inspire or provoke ● useful UN statistics on the world's people ● dates of religious holidays, cultural events and anniversaries ● a fold-out personal budget planner ● full-colour world map.

Ref: 01120

UK £8.95 • Can/US $14.95

NEW THIS YEAR
Second in series

THE WORLD IN YOUR KITCHEN

VEGETARIAN recipes from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East for Western kitchens, with country information and food facts.

Taste the delights of world vegetarian cooking with the New Internationalist's latest food book – 150 recipes tested and adapted for you to cook easily at home It's packed with exciting food ideas, many colour photos and fascinating facts.

More than a cook book:
● Over 25 full page colour photos ● Intriguing food facts for each recipe ● Attractive design and step-by-step cooking methods ● Full nutrition guide ● Vegetarianism set in the context of today's factory farm world ● Glossary of ingredients ● Hardback, ribbon marker. 176pp.

UK £12.99 • Can/US $22.95 Ref: 01309

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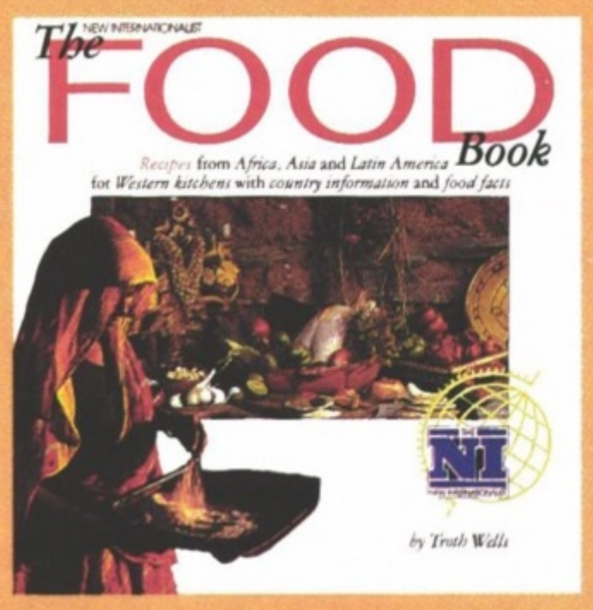


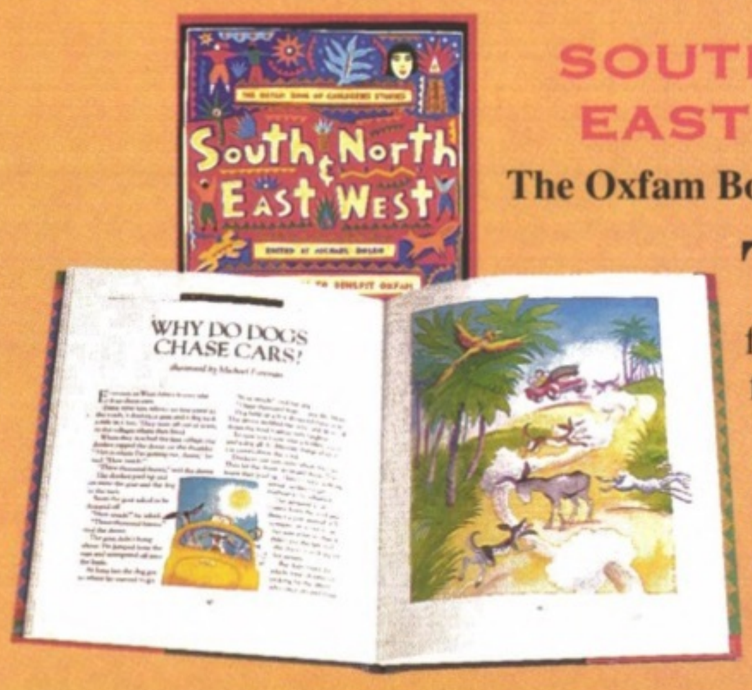
THIS attractive wipe-clean hardback publication features over 200 easy-to-follow delicious recipes from Africa, Asia and Latin America including sections on meat and fish, starters, salads and desserts, plus country information and food facts. Numerous illustrations and a ribbon marker. With over 25,000 copies already sold, the book has become a best seller with good reason. 184 pp.

Ref: 01139

UK £10.99 • Can/US $19.95

Canadian edition in conjunction with Second Story Press.

THINK OF YOUR CHRISTMAS GIFT LIST
New Internationalist publications make exciting and different Christmas gifts at reasonable prices.



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A RAY OF SUNSHINE ... FOR THE NEW YEAR

the 1994 THIRD WORLD CALENDAR

THE NI Third World Calendar is a collection of twelve lovely pictures by some of the world's best photographers. The images show Third World people, their work, their culture and their environment. You'll appreciate the amazing variety of these photographs: from a colourful wash-day on the river bank in India to Chinese opera stars swapping intimacies, from a Moroccan family enjoying the evening air in Marrakesh to the cheerful exuberance of young *Waday* women fetching water in rural Kenya.

This calendar is a celebration of our one world – to enjoy all the year. It measures 11" x 22" and comes in a sturdy carton ready for mailing to a relative or special friend.

Ref: 01287

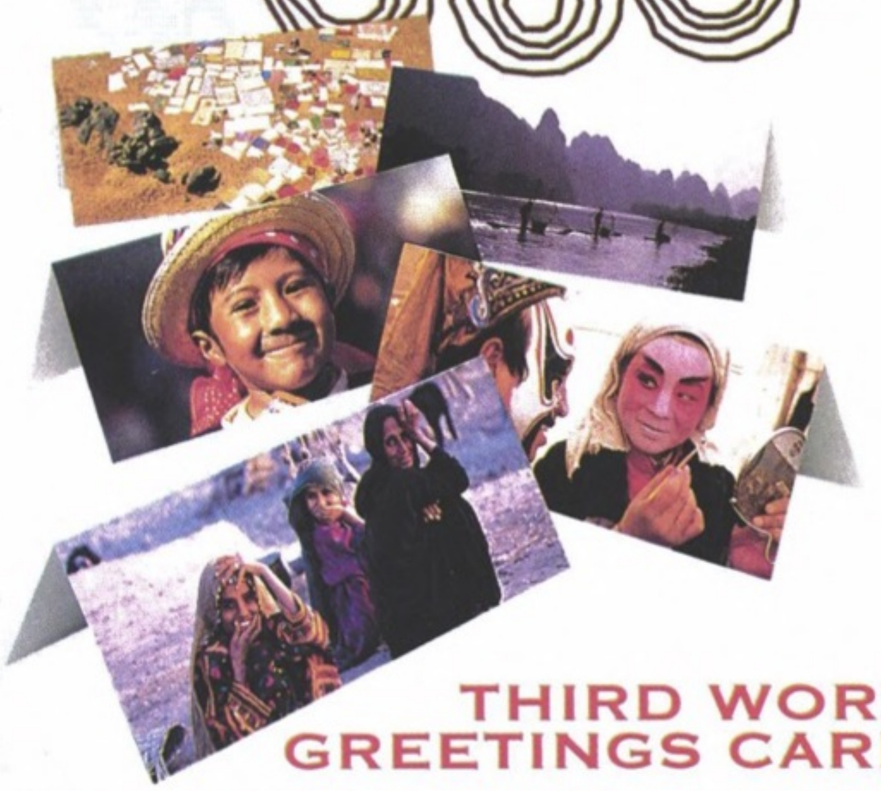
UK £8.95 ● Can/US $17.95

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PICTURE

provides a wealth of stories, facts, charts and illustrations which link-in with the front-side photo.

FREE OFFER

Order three calendars and/or almanacs to be sent to one address and you can have **FREE** a pack of 10 full-colour Third World Greetings Cards.



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